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# THE INDIAN AWAKENING AND BENGAL

BY

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## PREFACE

In the long annals of the history of India the nineteenth century occupies a unique position. From the ruins of the Mughal Empire and turmoils and upheavals of the succeeding years gradually emerged a New India. The ominous clouds of decay and disintegration, the sense of despair and depression that overshadowed the country in the eighteenth century passed away and the nineteenth century ushered in an era of immense possibilities. The country thrived with new life, unmistakable signs of a re-birth were manifest and momentous changes began to take place embracing various spheres of life. Boundless energy and revolutionary changes in the realm of ideas caused a transformation and this new spirit of rejuvenescence was reflected in the life and thought of the people. This historic and fascinating phase has variously been described as the Indian Renaissance, the Indian Reformation, the Indian Resurgence etc. but none of these terms is altogether satisfactory, and there is good ground for contesting the accuracy of each of them. But that Modern India evolved out of the awakening of the nineteenth century is a historic truth, and it was Bengal which was the centre of this awakening. The impact of British rule and Western education and the inspiration from her own classical literature and ancient heritage caused this change. The terms Indian Renaissance and the Bengal Renaissance, apparently borrowed from the European Renaissance, have often been applied to it. In the same vein the role of Bengal has been compared to that of Italy and Calcutta to that of Florence. Although such comparisons are often sweeping and misleading yet in a general sense these comparisons, to some extent, fit in with the history of nineteenth century-India. It was in Bengal that British rule was first firmly established, Western education was introduced, and a new economy was set up leading to the birth of middle-class intelligentsia which was in the forefront of the awakening. The responsive Bengali intellectual mind spent no time in applying the new knowledge in creative pursuits. It will not be a travesty of truth to assert that the principal social, religious and political movements of the century emanated from Bengal.

From Rammohun to Rabindranath is an epoch-making period in the history of Bengal and indeed of all India and an acquaintance with the historic movements of nineteenth-century-Bengal is indispensable for a complete knowledge of the Indian history of that century. The subject is as large as its importance. There are a few good works on the subject and there is abundance of both published and unpublished material. But as these are generally in Bengali they are beyond the reach of most people outside Bengal. Moreover, many valuable books covering different aspects of the subject are not available and numerous good articles and other materials are so scattered that it is difficult to obtain easy access to them. Thus the need of a book containing a comprehensive historical account and survey of the whole subject has long been felt. The subject is so vast and there is so much scope of further studies that it has been an arduous effort to accomplish the task. There is little scope for giving much detail of the entire subject in a work of this nature. But I have endeavoured to give a balanced and unbiased account of all the principal movements which, I hope, will help its readers to become familiar with the general trend of historical developments.

I am indebted to Prof. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar, Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, for his valuable advice and words of encouragement. My friend and colleague Sri Alokeranjan Dasgupta, M.A. has taken great interest in my work and has helped me in many ways. I am also thankful to Dr. Asit Kumar Banerjee of the Calcutta University, and to Sri Ratanlal Chatterjee M.A. My friend Sri Sobhon Bose, M.A. has been a constant source of inspiration and valuable suggestions. Sm. Lina Bose, M.A., has prepared the Index and her keenness expedited the completion of the work. In conclusion, I should express my gratitude to my students of the Jadavpur University, whose keenness on the subject and expressed difficulties in the absence of a comprehensive survey of the period first prompted me to undertake the work.

Ramkrishnapur, }  
Howrah, }  
*November, 1960.* }

NEMAI SADHAN BOSE.

*To*  
*My Teacher*  
*Professor A. L. Basham*



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## CHAPTER I

### THE BACKGROUND

The nineteenth century is one of the brightest periods of the history of India. In fact, it was the period that saw the birth of Modern India and the beginning of a series of thoughts and movements of far-reaching consequences. It is a well-known maxim that the deepest darkness precedes the brightest dawn and of this the glowing history of nineteenth century-India provides an admirably eloquent example. Actually the eighteenth century, particularly the later half of it, was one of the darkest ages in the long and eventful history of India. A survey of the political, socio-economic and religious condition of that age is necessary to understand thoroughly the developments of the nineteenth century in a proper historical perspective.

The decline of a mighty empire is almost invariably followed by anarchy, disorder and confusion. Disruptive forces get the upper hand in the country. As had always been in the past, so with the decline of the Mughal Empire India lost her political unity. The later Mughals were weak and unworthy rulers who governed only in name. The actual power was usurped by the nobles who, taking advantage of the weak rulers, had become very powerful. They were engaged in all sorts of conspiracies, intrigues, and other nefarious activities. The nobles cared only for self-aggrandizement, if they cared for anything at all. The French traveller Jean Law stated in 1759, "I have travelled everywhere from Bengal to Delhi, but nowhere have I found anything from any one except oppression of the poor and plundering of wayfarers. . . The Indian nobles are a set of disorderly, inconsistent blockheads, who exist solely for ruining a world of people."

Such a state of affairs was not perhaps altogether new in the history of India. But there was a new factor that

made a great difference between the past and the present situation. This new factor was the presence of the foreign traders, particularly the English, who were just waiting for the right moment to strike. The Battle of Plassey was one of such golden opportunities that the English made the best use of to get a firm foothold in India. The British laid the foundation of their empire without any opposition worth its name. A few hundred British soldiers and some Indian sepoys under the command of a nervous and vacillating Clive defeated a large Indian army in a few hours in the presence of thousands of onlookers. Even Clive, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, said, "the inhabitants, who were spectators upon that occasion must have amounted to some hundred thousands; and if they had an inclination to have destroyed the Europeans, they might have done it with sticks and stones." It is not very difficult to explain this rather strange phenomenon. The people were callous and indifferent. They took little or no interest in politics or political changes. Indian nationalism was totally absent. The people were divided and there was neither any public opinion nor any forum to express it. This disunity among the people and lack of political consciousness was one of the greatest factors that aided the foundation of British rule in India.

The course of events from 1757 to the firm foundation of the British Empire by Lord Wellesley is too well-known to be repeated. The lust for money on the part of the Company and its officers was not satisfied even after Plassey. Mir Jafar could not satisfy the demands of the English and was replaced by Mir Kasim. But they soon found the latter to be a tough man to deal with. Finally, the Company assumed the Diwani in 1765 which only complicated and worsened the state of affairs. The English collected the revenue and the puppet Nawab administered justice. The former had all the power but no responsibility and the latter had responsibility but no power. The result was confusion, disorder and economic ruin of the country. In the seventeen seventies the administration deteriorated immeasurably. Burke criticised the Company's government as "one of the most



corrupt and obstructive tyrannies, that probably ever existed in the world."

The East India Company's policy was mainly dominated by commercial interest. Along with the Company's trade, the servants of the Company also carried on their private trade. The methods they pursued and their activities in both private and public matters were full of nepotism, corruption, illegal exactions, bribery etc. There was a total breakdown of the political and economic structure of the country. The people were very badly affected and native trade and manufacture were ruined. In the course of only a few years, India was transformed from a manufacturing country to an entirely agricultural country. Faced with Western capitalism and industrialism the Indian industries could hardly hold their own for long. Becher wrote in 1769, "Since the accession of the Company to the Diwani the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before.... This fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government is verging towards ruin."

Spinning and weaving were the main industries of India. These were second only to agriculture. Among the flourishing home industries were the production of salt, saltpetre and raw silk etc. Cotton, silk piece-goods, raw silk, sugar, jute, saltpetre and opium were the main items of export from Bengal. But the Battle of Plassey marked the beginning of the economic ruin of Indian industries. The causes of this economic ruin were ; taking over of the Diwani by the Company, the fortunes acquired by the Company's servants ; the abuse of Dastaks *i.e.*, the Company's permits for external trade ; and the virtual monopoly enjoyed by the Company in matters of trade and manufacturing etc. To these were added the competition of English traders, and manufacturers enjoying the fruits of industrialism and capitalism and further aided by British legislations and restrictions.

The Permanent Settlement ushered in a new period in the economic history of India. With the disappearance of

home industries the people became interested in acquiring landed property. Cornwallis' administration gave an impetus in this direction and native capital was henceforward invested in land. The land system became very complex and the abuses of the Permanent Settlement made the condition of the *ryots* miserable. Not only the landed aristocracy but also the Company's oppressive system of administration and the activities of the English were responsible for the decline of agriculture. The English earned a very bad name in Bengal. It has been said that as soon as a European came to any village, the shops were closed and people ran for their own safety. In the *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin* the country has been compared to an untenanted house infested by robbers but having none to protect it.

There was another side to this picture. In Bengal there was the weaver-cultivator class. With the disappearance of the weaving industry, it became a class of cultivators only. This created the problem of unemployment and landless peasants. Poverty and decadence became widespread. The village money-lenders now came to occupy an important position in the rural economy of the country. Increase in population made the situation worse. Famine visited the country frequently. Burglary, robbery and other criminal activities were on the increase. The Government took no steps for the improvement of the sad plight of the *ryots*. On the contrary even the Police system, being inadequate, failed utterly to maintain peace and order in the country. Acts of cruelty and violence and other vices became the order of the day and the general standard of morality had gone down so much that such acts were neither punished nor even condemned. Lord Cornwallis once wrote to one of his friends, "Every native of Hindustan is (I really believe) corrupt". It was Lord Wellesley who replaced all native officials by Englishmen. This was the beginning of the steel-framed English bureaucracy in India. Indians were barred from being appointed to any important post in the administration. In short, the history of the early English domination of the country is a sordid story of exploitation and plunder resulting in the economic ruin of the country.

It was caused both by the East India Company's administration and the private trade carried on by its servants. The English had fantastic ideas about the fabulous wealth of India. It was expressed in the terms of "Lacks and Crores of Rupces, Sacks of Diamonds". One of the most coveted posts that an Englishman aspired for was that of a Writer in Bengal. In view of the above fact it is no wonder that an advertisement appeared in the *Public Advertiser* in England as follows :

"WRITER'S PLACE TO BENGAL : Wanted a WRITER'S PLACE TO BENGAL, for which one thousand guineas will be given." The salary of a writer was very small. But the salary mattered little. The post was regarded as an opportunity of plundering the helpless millions and accumulating enormous wealth.

Another important result of the East India Company's rule was the birth of a rich trading class in Bengal. The British officers were helped and guided in their work by the Indian *Banians*, *Sarkars*, *Munshis* or *Khajanchis*. The *Banian* was the "interpreter, head book-keeper, head secretary, head broker, supplier of cash and cash-keeper, and in general secret keeper" of the English officials. These *Banians* were centred in Calcutta, the chief centre of trade and commerce and the headquarters of the Company's administration.<sup>1</sup> Originally they were separated from craftsmen or intellectual classes. The part they played in the earlier years of the Company's rule was largely detrimental to the interest of the people and the country. But gradually the character of this class changed by coming into contact with the English and Western views. The need for English knowledge was keenly felt. Thus was created an educated middle class, the intelligentsia. In later years the descendants of this class of people played an important part in the Indian Renaissance.

The total breakdown of the political and economic structure of the country and its disastrous effects were also reflected in social and religious life. As inimitably described by Rabindranath Tagore, India was in a death-like sleep.

<sup>1</sup> Benoy Ghosh, *Vidyasagar O Bangali Samaj*, ii, pp. 11-14.

"Her life was dried up, and it showed all those dead and forgotten customs, superstitions and prejudices, all the ignorance and fear, all feuds, all bitterness and separateness, all unreasonableness and remoteness from the wide world." The system of education was utterly deplorable and the education imparted was very narrow. The study of the Sanskrit language, sacred literature or ancient classics had practically become extinct. There were only *Tols*, *Mahtabs* and *Pathshalas* which taught rudimentary Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and elementary mathematics needed for practical use in daily life. The vernacular literature had made little progress. Bengali prose was yet unborn. Books were mostly written in verses. The literature read and produced in the country, excepting a very few works, was of a very low standard, often being vulgar and crude and of little educative or literary value.

Decay of knowledge and learning coupled with social degeneration helped the extensive spread of blind superstition and inhuman social customs. Polygamy, early marriage, *Sali* rites, killing of female children, throwing of the first child into the holy rivers etc. were some of the most dreadful and inhuman practices performed in the different parts of the country in varying degrees. It must however be mentioned here that these social practices were not new developments. But only now did these practices become rampant. Perhaps the worst aspect of this social degeneration was the terrible sufferings and social fetters of the womenfolk. There was no freedom for women. They did not enjoy any right or privileges. In the name of Kulinism hundreds and thousands of girls' lives were totally blasted. Rich Hindus in Bengal were mostly polygamous and left their wives confined in the house. These people were generally licentious. They used to boast of their debauchery in public and considered it to be an act of pride and courage. Narcotics were taken individually and collectively. There were even societies for that purpose in Calcutta. Flattery, conceit and treachery were some of the most common vices among the rich. Honesty and truthfulness could hardly be found among the people. Corruption of justice and malpractices in the law courts had helped the growth of the notion that false evi-

dence was the main thing required to win a case or to prove a point. Forgery, fraud and bribery became obnoxiously prevalent.

From the journals of the nineteenth century we get a sordid picture of the socio-religious condition of Calcutta at the time when Raja Rammohun Roy came to settle down there. Sacrificial rites, outward show, lavishness and exuberance marked religious festivals and the people remained contented with such things. An enormous amount of money was spent on festivities or gala occasions like *Durga Puja*, *Kali Puja* etc. and in entertainments such as the *Baiji* dance, *Jatra* etc. or family ceremonies like *Sraddha*, *Annaprasan* or *Vivaha*. It is said that many big Zamindars of the age even used to spend thousands of rupees on occasions like the 'marriage' of their pets.

The study of the Vedas and the Upanishads had become almost extinct. Superstition and irrational orthodoxy had taken the place of reasoning. None could even dare to raise a voice against social and religious abuses. Rigorous austerity and bigotry were accepted as the highest ideals of the Brahmins. Those Brahmins who worked under the English in offices or other places, used to go through some sort of a purification ceremony after coming back from work, before taking their meal late at night. Those who could not afford to take so much trouble got themselves purified by making offerings to Brahmins.

A class of orthodox Brahmins practically served the purpose of daily news reporters. Early in the morning they used to go to the Ganges for a bath and on their way to and from the river they would spread all sorts of news, mainly wild gossip, canards and scandals, either praising or denouncing different people. In most cases they were practically illiterate. But people were afraid of these Brahmins who exercised considerable influence on them, particularly on the lower strata of the society. The Brahmin Pandits devoted most of their time to the study of the *Nyayasastras* and *Smriti*. Very few could explain the Vedic prayers that they had to say three times a day.

Most of the people belonging to the upper class could hardly read or write correctly; useful knowledge of arithmetic and language, sufficient for business and other work was considered to be more than enough. Those who could mutter a few words of English enjoyed an enviable position in society. Kite-flying, bird-fighting, vulgar and obscene *Jatras* and other such theatrical or musical performances, a debased form of music, and contests between *Kaviwals* were the most popular forms of entertainment.

Morality and moral standards reached their lowest ebb. The Government followed a policy of *laissez faire* in social and religious matters. So the evil practices went on unabated. The life in the cities, even in Calcutta, was extremely unsavoury. The sanitary condition was pathetic, roads were unsafe and there was no sewage system. The city abounded with noxious insects. Thus the picture we get of the civic life in Calcutta, the chief metropolis of India, makes us shudder.

The evils of social life and the prevalence of horrible social customs were supposed to have behind them religious sanction. Everything was thought to be approved by the revealed scripture. In the name of religion many obnoxious practices and objectionable rites were current in the country. As summed up by Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta, the general term Hinduism was used to denote a jumble of various Brahmanic rites of a later origin, Mahayanist ceremonies and beliefs, Buddhist-Tantric rites, Buddhist-Sahajiyani customs etc. Totemistic notions of purity and taboo in the matter of touch and smell, non-Aryan customs and recromancies, belief in witchcraft and sorcery—all were known as Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> The Christian missionaries vehemently attacked the Hindu religion in order to prove the superiority of their own faith. In criticising the Hindu religion some of them went so far as to say, "All your Gods are nothing else but demons; you will go to hell to expiate in eternal flames the crime of your idolatry." The missionaries, no doubt, lacked a sense of reality and understanding owing to

<sup>2</sup> B. N. Dutta, *Swami Vivekananda, Patriot-Prophet*, p. 37.

their biased outlook and religious motives. But these attacks served a very useful purpose. They roused the people from their slumber and lethargy and stirred them up to think and thus helped to end their immobility.

Bengal and indeed the whole of India, thus presented a very dismal picture in the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. But fortunately, in the midst of darkness there was a streak of light. A new era was dawning in India through the interplay of several factors : inspiration from ancient traditions and India's glorious past ; introduction of English education and coming into contact with the West and Western thought that came through different channels, the teachings of Bacon, Locke, Voltaire, Burke, Bentham, Mill, Newton and others. It is a much debated point whether the Bengal or Indian Renaissance would have occurred without the Western impact and the birth of an English educated intelligentsia. The facts as they are indicate that there was inspiration from outside and an urge from within which coupled to produce startling results and ushered in a new age. In the words of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "The Indian Renaissance was possible only because a principle was discovered by which India could throw herself into the full current of modern civilisation in the outer world without totally discarding her past. She could approach the temple of modern art and science not as a naked beggar, not as an utter alien, but as a backward and at present impoverished country..." The Renaissance was the product of a synthesis—the best of Western learning and the glories of the largely-forgotten Indian culture and tradition.

## CHAPTER II

### RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

In the midst of the darkness that prevailed all over the country the first man who saw the vision of a New India was Raja Rammohun Roy. He is aptly called the inaugurator of the Modern Age in India. As observed by Rabindranath, "He was born at a time when our country having lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstance. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity." Rammohun was the first Indian to become keenly conscious of this degeneration and to attempt to put an end to this state of affairs that was leading the country to total disaster. His activities embraced various spheres of life and everywhere he paved a new way for the future generation of Indians to follow.

Rammohun Roy was born on 22 May, 1772 in Radhanagar in Arambag sub-division of Hooghly district. His father's name was Ramkanta Roy and his mother's name was Tarini, more well-known as Phulthakurani. Rammohun was born in a well-to-do family and his ancestors had enjoyed positions of trust and responsibility under the Nawabs of Murshidabad.

Rammohun had his early education at home in a *Pathshala*. He learnt Persian under a Maulavi and went to Patna to learn the Arabic language. In Patna he studied the Koran and was influenced by the Sufi philosophy, and throughout his life he never shook off this Mohammedan influence.

On returning from Patna he had differences with his father on religious matters and beliefs. This contention is, however, disputed by some scholars, who argue that Rammohun had not developed any particular religious dogma



by that time. After this he left his father's home and went to Tibet for the study of Buddhism. There is a view that he went to Tibet because he was dissatisfied with the British Government in the country. But such a contention is absolutely baseless and is not corroborated by an evidence. In Tibet Rammohun caused the displeasure of the Lamas and got into such serious trouble that even his life was in danger. His life was, however, saved by some Tibetan ladies and he managed to escape from Tibet. It is said that Rammohun never forgot this act of kindness and it was partly as a result of this that he always remained grateful to the womenfolk and fought for their emancipation.

Rammohun spent in all three to four years in travel and then returned to stay in Benaras. Benaras was the centre of Sanskrit learning and here he studied the Sanskrit language and the sacred Hindu literature.

In 1803 Rammohun's father died. He now moved to Murshidabad. In Murshidabad appeared his first publication, entitled Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin or 'A Gift to Monotheists'. In this work Rammohun protested against the idolatry and superstitions of all creeds and tried to lay a common foundation of a Universal Religion in the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead.

About the same time another work of Rammohun in Persian entitled Manazarat-ul-Adiyan or 'Discussions on various Religions' came out. By now Rammohun had joined the service of the East India Company in the Revenue Department as a Dewan (Revenue Officer) to Thomas Woodforde. Later in 1805 he came to work under Mr. John Digby. He served under this official for some years in different places and accompanied him to Rungpore in 1809 as the *Sheristadar* or native assistant to the Collector of Revenue.

Rammohun stayed in Rungpore for the next five years (1809-1814), which formed one of the most fruitful periods of his life. While staying in Rungpore he improved his own knowledge and learning by study and holding discussions with learned people of various religions sects, such as Hindus,

Mohammedans, Jains etc. He made a thorough study of modern Tantric works with the help of Hariharananda Tirthaswamy, who was an authority on the subject. He also studied the *Kalpa Sutra* and other works of the Jaina religion. Thus he became well conversant with the doctrines of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Jainism, which helped to develop and mature his own religious views and principles. He now began to express his religious ideas among the people he met. Some sort of an informal club was formed which used to meet in his residence every evening. These meetings were attended by all classes of people for the discussion of various religious topics. The meetings, which often criticised the orthodox Hindu religion and practices, raised a storm in Rungpore. A hostile party was set up under the leadership of a very learned Brahmin named Gaurikanta Bhattacharya. This group organized counter meetings where orthodox Hinduism was upheld. Gaurikanta Bhattacharya in a Bengali book named *Jnananjana*, published in 1821, challenged the religious views of Rammohun Roy.

While working under Digby, Rammohun had been learning English. He started to learn English when he was 22 years old. It is interesting to note that a man who could "merely speak well enough to be understood" in 1805 ultimately became a master of the language. In a letter to Rammohun, Jeremy Bentham wrote, "Your works are made known to me by a book in which I read a style, which, but for the name of a Hindu, I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman." It was while with Digby that he also began to take a keen interest in European politics. He used to read all the papers and journals that came to Digby.

Thus it is clear that in Rungpore Rammohun was preparing for his life-work. In 1814 Digby left for England on leave and in the same year Rammohun retired from the service of the East India Company, settling in Calcutta in 1815.

It is unwise to take any particular date as the beginning of any historical movement. Nevertheless it is gene-

rally accepted, for the sake of convenience, that the Bengal Renaissance started in 1815 when Rammohun came down to settle in Calcutta and began his life's work. He was now determined to destroy what he considered to be the root evil of the prevailing ignorance and superstition. This root, according to him, was idolatry accompanied by injurious rites. To popularise his own religious views he took several measures, such as the publication of books and magazines, the holding of conversations and discourses, the establishment of associations and the foundation of schools.

### Religion :

In 1815 Rammohun founded the *Atmiya Sabha* or 'Friendly Association' for discussing theological subjects. It was an inner circle of aristocratic and new middle-class liberals who gathered around Rammohun Roy and had sympathies with his views and objects. The *Sabha* met once a week and in its meetings Hindu scriptures were recited and Theistic hymns composed by Rammohun and his friends were chanted. Sometimes social evils and the way to remedy them were also discussed in the meetings. Amongst those who came to the meetings of the *Atmiya Sabha* were Dwarakanath Tagore of Jorasanko, Prasanna Kumar Tagore of Pathuriaghata, Kalinath and Baikunthanath Munshi of Taki, Raja Kailsankar Ghosal of Bhukailash, Nandakishore Bose, Brindaban Mitra, Brojomohon Majumdar, Nilratan Haldar, Annada Prosad Banerji of Telenipara etc. All those who came to the meetings did not necessarily wholeheartedly support the views of Rammohun. Some came to earn for themselves the honour of association with such a distinguished man, some came to seek his counsel in business matters or for other purposes. Many of these people parted with him when his views caused a stir in Hindu society and raised a storm in the orthodox community. But some of his associates did have genuine sympathy and admiration for his views and objects. Among those who helped Rammohun in quoting and expounding ancient scriptures were Pandit Sivaprosad Misra and Hariharananda Tirthaswamy. Ramchandra Vidyavagish, the first Minister of the Brahmo Samaj,

was a younger brother of Hariharananda. The latter brought Ramchandra to Calcutta and placed him under the care of Rammohun.

The *Atmiya Sabha* used to arrange discussion meetings which attracted all classes of people. One such interesting meeting was held in 1819 when a debate took place between Rammohun and Subrahmanya Sastri, a renowned scholar of Madras. In this polemical combat a large and distinguished audience, including Raja Radhakanta Deb of Sobhabazar, the leader of the orthodox Hindu society, was present. Rammohun is said to have silenced his opponent by a rare display of erudition and forensic skill. He also entered into polemical combat with renowned Pandits like Sankar Sastri, Mrityunjaya Vidyalkar and Utsabananda Vidyavagish and is credited with victories over his opponents. The *Atmiya Sabha* meetings were no longer held after 1819.

As another means of propagating his religious views Rammohun published a number of books and tracts during this period. In 1815 he published a translation of the Vedanta Sutra and between 1816-1819 he published the Bengali translation of Isa, Kena, Katha, Mundaka and Mandukya Upanishads. Rammohun vindicated the purity and monotheistic doctrines of the Upanishads, and he thought the translation of the Upanishads to be a very effective means of proving to the people the superiority of his monotheistic creed. He wrote in 1816, "My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites, introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatry, which more than any other Pagan worship destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error : and by making them acquainted with their Scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God." Besides the above mentioned works he published a large number of books and tracts in subsequent years.

These publications started an intense and widespread agitation not only in Hindu society in Bengal but also in

other parts of India. The orthodox Hindu society also began to organize itself in defence of the popular and current Hindu religious belief and customs. Rammohun and his associates now faced a determined and hostile opposition and were even threatened with social persecution. But Rammohun remained firm and steadfast in his object. He was quite aware of the consequence of his preaching. In the Preface to his English work *Abridgement of the Vedanta* he wrote :

“By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches, even of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation: my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly !”

It has already been stated that the study of the Vedas and the Upanishads had long become practically extinct. But Rammohun revived the study and discussion of the ancient scriptures. He was the first man to translate and explain the Vedanta in Bengali, though he mainly propagated the non-dualism of Sankaracharya. His main object was to prove that in the most revered of all Hindu scriptures the worship of the one formless True God is recognized as the highest form of worship and that the image worship and polytheism of the later Puranic religion are mainly responsible for the degeneration of Hindu society. But Rammohun gave the Puranas and the Tantras the status of Sastras and admitted that image worship was intended for people of lower religious standards.

In 1825 he founded the Vedanta College where along with Western science and philosophy the students were to be taught the Vedanta philosophy. The Vedanta College was set up “with a view to the propagation and defence of

Hindu Unitarianism". The College, however, did not last long. But this institution and the translations from the Vedanta are, as aptly pointed out by Miss Collect, "witness to his continuity with the historic past of India and as the implement enabling him to connect her with a progressive future."

In 1820 Rammohun entered into a different phase of his religious activities and became involved in a controversy with the Christian missionaries. The controversy began with the publication in 1820 of his work entitled *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Before the publication of this work he thoroughly studied both the Old and the New Testaments. For this he even learnt the Greek and Hebrew languages. Rammohun was deeply influenced by Christian doctrines and this he made clear in a letter to Digby in 1817 where he wrote, "I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which have come to my knowledge." In his book Rammohun tried to give a liberal interpretation of Christianity and it was "a collection of all the moral and spiritual precepts of Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, without the narratives of the miracles." Rammohun emphasised that the moral teaching of Christianity had a greater appeal than its metaphysical theology. The ideal humanity, and the tendency to promote the peace and harmony of mankind at large and to raise them to high and liberal notions of one God, was to him the chief characteristic of the Christian religion.

Rammohun neither wanted nor anticipated a controversy on this matter. But this book raised a storm and led to what is known as the Serampore controversy.

The Serampore missionaries took serious offence at his interpretation of Christianity and they attacked him in their periodical *Friend of India* as a 'heathen'. His book was severely criticised as it was expected to "greatly injure the cause of truth". Rammohun took these violent attacks with his usual calmness and in defence of his views published successively three *Appeals to the Christian Public* between 1820 and 1823. The controversy ultimately centred round

the Christian Doctrine of Trinity. In all these *Appeals* Rammohun revealed his remarkable knowledge of Christian theology and his faith in the unity of the Godhead. In course of this heated controversy stalwart missionaries like Dr. Marshman often lost their temper and attacked Rammohun and Hinduism intemperately. But Rammohun always remained calm and cool. He was complemented by the *India Gazette*, a contemporary journal, "for the unrivalled good temper with which he could argue".

In 1821 the conversion of Rev. Willian Adam, a Baptist missionary, to unitarian doctrine owing to Rammohun's influence further stimulated the controversy. At this time Adam, one Rev. Yates and Rammohun were engaged in translating the four Gospels into Bengali. Yates soon gave up the task owing to differences with Rammohun on the question of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Very soon Adam lost his faith in the Trinity after deliberations with Rammohun. He wrote to one of his friends that "the objections against it compared with the arguments for it appear to me like a mountain compared with a molchill." The conversion of Adam caused a great sensation and made the missionaries furious. Adam was called by the Christians "the second fallen Adam". Rammohun was even tempted by Dr. Middleton, the Bishop of Calcutta, to accept Christianity which would open a "grand career" to him and would make him the "modern Apostle of India". This shameful offer seriously wounded the feelings of Rammohun and he never saw the Bishop again.

The missionaries with renewed vigour began to attack Rammohun and Hinduism in their Bengali journal *Samachar Darpan*. As his replies were not published in the missionary paper, Rammohun started the *Brahmunical Magazine* or *Brahman Sebadhi* (in Bengali) as a "vindication of the Hindu religion against the attacks of Christian missionaries". He used to give his replies in the name of Shivaprasad Sharma. In these articles Rammohun emerge as a great champion of Hindu theism and of the Indian tradition and heritage. He firmly stated that the superiority of the Christian religion should not be attempted to be proved "by

means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain" or by taking advantage of the fact that Christianity is the religion of the conqueror.

In September 1821, through the interest and initiative taken by Adam, Rammohun and others, the Unitarian Committee was founded. The object of the Committee was "to remove ignorance and superstition, and to furnish information respecting the evidences, the duties, and doctrines of the religion of Christ." The Unitarian Committee used to run an Anglo-Hindu School, and arrange congregational services and it owned a printing press. But, in spite of the best efforts of Rammohun and Adam the Unitarian Committee was not much of a success.

Rammohun's battle with the missionaries still continued and in 1823 in the *Brahmunicipal Magazine* he criticised Trinitarian and Calvinistic doctrines and challenged Christian theologians to defend them. This drew him into controversy with Dr. Tytler, a Professor of the Hindu College and Superintendent of the Medical School. Tytler published his defence of orthodox Christianity in the columns of the *Bengal Harkara*. Rammohun replied to Tytler's arguments under the pen name of Ram Doss. The satirical replies of Rammohun infuriated Tytler so much that he lost all sense of decorum in his articles. But Rammohun took all these attacks calmly.

In the same year Rammohun published in the name of one of his close associates, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, *Humble Suggestions to My countrymen who believe in the One True God*. In this work he requested his followers not to use harsh or abusive language in their relations with the European missionaries. This practically ended the famous Serampore controversy, even though in 1827 Rammohun, in an article published in the name of Chandrasekhar Deb, criticised the Trinitarian polytheism. It is to be remarked in this connection that whatever may be the merits or demerits of Rammohun's views on Christian theology, he was not an enemy of Christianity. On the contrary he had the highest respect for Christ and his teachings and he believed Christianity to be of considerable value for his countrymen.



When he was engaged in controversy with the missionaries, Rammohun also faced criticism of protagonists of orthodox Hinduism who disapproved of his religious views and his criticisms of orthodoxy. He and his associates were attacked in a Bengali tract entitled *Char Prasna* or 'Four Question' by Kasinath Tarkapanchanan, in which it was practically suggested that Rammohun and his followers should be boycotted as renegades. Rammohun replied to these criticisms very convincingly in a number of tracts.

Rammohun, as already stated, was a great friend of Adam and patron of the Unitarian Mission in Calcutta. He and his followers used to attend Unitarian Service every Sunday morning. This naturally led to public criticism and his action was viewed with suspicion. Rammohun, being aware of this criticism, published a tract in 1827 in the name of Chandrasekhar Deb, entitled *Answer of a Hindu to the Question: Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship instead of the numerously attended Established Churches?*

His main argument was that the Unitarians believe in the unity of God, which is the main doctrine propagated by the Christian scriptures and also the Vedas. However, it seems that the Unitarians had hoped that Rammohun would ultimately be converted to their faith. But all such hopes of the Unitarians were belied with the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj on 20 August, 1828. It marked the culmination of Rammohun's religious thought. At that time it was popularly known as the *Brahma Sabha*. The Unitarians, including Adam and Dr. Tuckerman, were very disappointed and even the contemporary journal *John Bull* commented that the liberal Hindu had slid from Unitarianism into pure Deism. The paper particularly regretted that the last hope of Rammohun Roy becoming a great agent of propagation of Christianity in India was lost.

The first building of the Brahmo Samaj was founded in January, 1830. It was placed in the hands of a body of Trustees and the famous Trust Deed defined the main principles of the Brahmo movement as started by Rammohun.

The history of the Brahmo Samaj will be traced in a subsequent chapter.

### **Social Reforms :**

Rammohun Roy was not merely a religious reformer. He initiated a number of social reform movements. He was opposed to all social evils and abuses. The worst sufferers of the social degeneration and inhuman social customs of the times were the women. Rammohun was a great champion of the cause of the emancipation of women. In this respect his most remarkable contribution to the cause of social reform was his great fight for the abolition of the practice of *Sati*. He was seriously opposed to polygamy and child-marriage, which were largely responsible for the wretched and pitiable condition of the women. He stoutly defended the legal rights of women and advocated their right to education and enlightenment. He also condemned the caste system, which he thought to be responsible for causing divisions in society and hampering the growth of patriotic feelings.

### **Education :**

The introduction of Western education was undoubtedly one of the main factors that caused the Indian awakening. Rammohun felt the need for this and was one of the main advocates of English education in India. He himself was a great Sanskrit scholar and moreover he was thoroughly acquainted with Persian, and with the literature of Jainism, Buddhism and other religions. He and his great friend David Hare took the initiative in the foundation of the Hindu College in 1816 for imparting education in the science and literature of Europe. The Hindu College was opened in 1817, but owing to opposition from influential orthodox Hindus Rammohun was excluded from the College Committee. But broad-hearted Rammohun cared little for personal pride or position and he remained satisfied in seeing his efforts prove fruitful. He started an English school, well known as the Anglo-Hindu School, where Western science, philosophy and literature were taught. It was a free institu-

tion mainly supported by Rammohun and some of his friends. Among the students of this school was Devendranath Tagore. After Rammohun's departure for England the school was run by its Head Master Purna Chandra Mittra, and hence it became popularly known as Purna Mittra's School. From 1839 the school was renamed the Indian Academy.

Another significant contribution of Rammohun in the field of education was that he drew the Christian Missions to this field. In 1823 he requested the Church of Scotland Assembly to send out competent teachers to spread English education in India. In 1830 Dr. Alexander Duff, the famous missionary educationist, came to India. He was warmly welcomed by Rammohun and he rendered him all possible help in starting an English school.

But by far the most important contribution of Rammohun as an educational reformer was his letter to Lord Amherst in 1823, in which he protested against the proposed foundation of a Sanskrit College, and pleaded for a Government policy of introducing Western education. This practically touched off the great controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists on the question of the educational policy to be pursued by the Government. The stand taken by Rammohun and his severe criticism of the prevailing system of education caused indignation among the majority of the Indians. But Rammohun with his great foresight was preparing the path for the Western education along modern lines which as we shall see later, was accepted by the Government in 1835.

### **Journalism :** ✓

One of the most effective weapons for propagating and popularising respective view points in the nineteenth century was the Press. Rammohun wrote and published a number of books and tracts to vindicate his views and principles. Most of these tracts were intended for the general public and as such were written in the common language. His overall contribution to the making of Bengali prose literature is considerable. Moreover, Rammohun's efforts for promoting

Indian journalism were very notable. He, being a man with sharp intellect, realised the immense value of newspapers and journals as instruments for popularising his views. Among the papers that he used as his organs was the Bengali weekly *Sambad Kaumudi* or 'The Moon of Intelligence'. It first came out on 4 December, 1821 and it was to include "religious, moral and political matters; domestic occurrences; foreign as well as local intelligence". "Public good" was the paper's main object. The *Sambad Kaumudi* no doubt, occupies a unique position in the history of Indian journalism. But it cannot justly be regarded as the parent of Indian journalism, nor can Rammohun be regarded as the "founder of native journalism in India". The *Bengal Gazette* of Gangadhar Bhattacharya came out in 1818. The Serampore missionaries started the publication of the Bengali monthly *Digdarshan*, and the weekly *Samachar Darpan* (1818) long before the beginning of the *Sambad Kaumudi*.

In 1822 he started a weekly paper in Persian named *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* or 'Mirror of Intelligence'. The *Sambad Kaumudi* was mainly intended for the common man, whereas the *Mirat* was for the educated classes. The *Mirat* contained articles not only on internal affairs but also on international problems, such as the Irish discontent, the national aspirations of the Greeks etc. The general standard of writing in the *Sambad Kaumudi* and the *Mirat* was of a very high order and they set indeed a very high standard of Indian journalism. Apart from being one of the pioneers of Bengali journalism, Rammohun's name is associated with the struggle for a Free Press in India. His Memorial against the Press Ordinance of 1823 to the Supreme Court and then to the Privy Council, his closure of the publication of the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* as a protest against the repressive Government Ordinance have earned for him a revered place in the history of the Indian Press.

### **Political Consciousness :**

The agitation that Rammohun started against the Press Ordinance of 1823 is important for more than one reason. It may be regarded as the first constitutional agita-

tion in India. This is the first instance of an organized effort to rally the intelligentsia against an encroachment on the fundamental rights of the people. This was not the only time that Rammohun defended stubbornly the rights and privileges of the people. In 1827 he protested against the Jury Act that introduced discrimination even in the Courts of Justice. Three years later, in 1830, we find him protesting against the Government proposal to tax rent-free lands. Lastly, we must recall the agitation that he started on the eve of the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833. One of the main objects of his visit to England was to argue against the monopoly rights and other privileges enjoyed by the East India Company in India, and to place before the Parliament a list of other demands. Besides taking the initiative in all the constitutional agitations of the period, he exploded the myth of persons "degraded by Asiatic effeminacy". He emphatically asserted that the Indians have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people. It is no wonder that he has been called "the father of political regeneration in India".

### **Economic Views :**

The miserable condition of the peasants in India and the serious economic crisis that gripped the country did not fail to draw his concern and sympathy. In his *Communications to the Board of Control* Rammohun presented the case of the poor *ryots*. The Permanent Settlement (1793) had improved the condition of the land-holders but had made the condition of the cultivators worse. Rammohun suggested that there should be no further rise in rent. He also suggested that the revenue demanded from the Zamindars should be reduced, so that a reduction in the *ryot's* rent would be assured. He argued that the decrease in revenue might be met by increasing taxes on luxuries and by appointing low-salaried Indian Collectors in place of high-salaried Europeans. He approved the Permanent Settlement but wanted the fixation of the maximum rent to be paid by the *ryot*.

Another problem that drew his attention was the "Eco-

conomic Drain" of India. Every year a huge amount of money was taken out of India by European traders, consequently ruining the economy of the country. As a remedy to this evil he suggested that a system should be devised which would encourage wealthy Europeans to settle with their families permanently in India. He believed that this would improve the resources of the country. Moreover, the European landlords by showing their superior methods of cultivation were likely to help the improvement of the Indian agrarian system. The economic views of Rammohun and his suggested remedies may not stand the test of sound economic principles, but they reveal his deep sympathy for the peasantry and his concern for the economic development of India.

#### ✓ **International Sympathies and Contacts :**

Rammohun was a man of varied interests and multifarious activities and these did not remain confined within the country of his birth only. He had sympathies and contacts with the people of the world and the international events and movements of his time.

As has already been stated, he began to read the Western papers and journals that came to Mr. Digby in Rungpore. This naturally aroused his interest in European politics. He, like many others, in the outset mistook Napoleon as fighting for the cause of Liberty. But the Napoleonic Wars soon disillusioned him and his admiration for the Great Bonaparte turned into hatred. The publication of articles on current international problems such as the Chinese question, the struggle in Greece, the problem of Ireland etc. in his papers reflected his keen interest in those international issues. An ardent supporter of all progressive movements as he was, Rammohun was very shocked at the failure of the Revolution in Naples in 1821. He felt so dejected that he cancelled all his engagements after hearing the news. On the other hand, the successful Spanish American Revolution of 1823 pleased him to such an extent that he gave a public dinner in honour of the Revolution. His great sympathy for the revolutionary movement was

not unknown abroad. A book in Spanish with the new constitution in it was dedicated to him. He took an absorbing interest in the French July Revolution of 1830 which he viewed as a triumph of Liberty. On his way to England in 1830 he met with a serious accident at Cape Town which practically lamed him for eighteen months. But even though in great pain Rammohun insisted on visiting two French frigates flying the revolutionary tricolour flag. This flag to him was the symbol of the triumph of right over might and as he left the vessels he again and again shouted, "Glory, glory, glory, to France". This is undoubtedly a striking instance of his great devotion to the cause of Liberty which he esteemed throughout his life. During his short stay he also contributed to the University funds in South Africa.

He was very pleased to know on his way to England that the Reform Bill agitation was making good progress. Himself a great reformer, Rammohun was a staunch supporter of the Reform Bill. He viewed the agitation as a "struggle between right and wrong". He even expressed his resolution of severing his English connections if the Bill was rejected. Judged from a practical point of view such a resolution may appear to be of little value but one can hardly ignore the depth of his feelings on the subject. The last years of his life were spent in England and his activities and views expressed there on different problems throw interesting light on his versatility. But first we must examine the object of his visit to England, which was significant for more than one reason.

Rammohun sailed for England on 15 November, 1830 and this fulfilled one of his cherished desires, which he had had in mind since 1815. Originally he wanted to go to England to study in one of the Universities. This desire of the Raja remained unfulfilled. He left for England in 1830 with three main objects. Firstly, to represent the grievances of the titular Mughal Emperor of Delhi, Akbar II, to the British King. It was the Mughal Emperor who invested him with the title of *Raja*, "in consideration of the respectability attaching to his office" as the "Envoy from the Court

of Delhi". Secondly, Rammohun wanted to present memorials in favour of the abolition of the *Sati* (1828) and to counteract the agitation carried on in England by the orthodox Hindus against the Government Act prohibiting *Sati*. Thirdly, the East India Company's Charter was to be renewed in 1833 and Rammohun wished to be present in England on the eve of its renewal to present certain demands on behalf of the Indians.

Apart from what he did in England, this visit of Rammohun to Europe was of great significance. He was the first Brahmin to cross the Ocean and go to Europe. Thus he set a precedent and "was the first Hindu of eminence who dared to break the spell which for ages the sea had laid on India." Moreover, he was not merely the envoy of the Mughal Emperor to the British King. He was the ambassador of a New India to England or indeed of the East to the West. "As he had interpreted England to India, so now he interpreted India to England." His visit helped to arouse the interest of many Englishmen in India and her grievances and problems. Wherever he went he was warmly received and eagerly heard and appreciated.

Rammohun had already been in contact with some of the leading men in the West and his name was known to a fairly large number of men in Europe and also to some in America. Among the people he met in England were the noted historian William Roscoe, the famous utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, Lord Brougham the great advocate of popular education and of the abolition of slavery, and Robert Owen one of the earliest exponents of British Socialism. Before a Committee of the House of Commons he submitted three papers on the revenue system of India, the judicial system of India and the material condition of India. He attended the coronation of William IV and was presented to the King.

Rammohun visited France in 1832. His fame had already reached there. His views and his works in India were noted with appreciation by Sismondi in *Révue Encyclopédique* in 1824. He had been elected a Honorary Member of the Société Asiatique of Paris. He met the French



king Louis Philippe on more than one occasion. He returned to England in 1833 and had the satisfaction of seeing the rejection of the memorial of the orthodox Hindus by the Privy Council. The Company's Charter was renewed in 1833 but the terms of the Charter were not to Rammohun's mind and he was disappointed.

Rammohun by now was a very tired man, worn down with overwork and anxieties. He went to Bristol for a much needed rest. But there he fell ill and passed away on 27 September, 1833.

The nineteenth century was a very creative age not only in the history of Bengal but also in the history of India. Naturally the age also produced an unusually large number of distinguished men in different parts of the land. Among all those who contributed to the awakening of the country Raja Rammohun Roy undoubtedly occupies the foremost position. He has been called the 'Pole Star' of Indian awakening, 'the Prometheus' of nineteenth century-India, 'the Erasmus' of the Indian Reformation, the 'inaugurator' of the New Age. But there are also scholars who, while acknowledging the significant role of Rammohun, are very critical in their appraisals of the great man. Actually it must be admitted that the contribution of Rammohun to the making of modern India is hardly appreciated in its real historical perspective by people outside the circle interested in the history of the nineteenth century.

Rammohun's claim as the pioneer of the Indian awakening can never be seriously challenged. All through his life he waged incessant war against ignorance and superstition, decadence and degeneration. He zealously sought new knowledge and proclaimed it courageously. It was he who first roused an independent spirit and humanistic feelings in Bengal after a long time and gave that spirit a modern form. He wanted to destroy the wall of seclusion, customs and prejudices which India had built round herself in the preceding age. He was against narrowness, sectarianism and all social evils. By his individualism, sharp intellect, free thinking and rationalistic attitude he struck at the root of immobility. He

ended stagnation and stirred the country to thought and action in different aspects of life.

The chief characteristic of Rammohun's life and thought was the synthesis of the very best of the Western and Eastern culture. He did not receive his inspiration from Western learning only but also from Indian sources. Rammohun, as we have already noted, was a great Sanskritist and at the same time knew Persian very well. For his knowledge of Persian and Islamic philosophy he was called a "*Zabardast Maulavi*". The influence of the two Moslem schools of thought—Mutazala and Muwahiddin—upon him is known to all students of the period. Dr. Brajendranath Seal rightly remarked, "The Free thought and Universalistic outlook of the Mohammedan rationalists (the Muta Z'alis of the 8th century) and the Mohammedan unitarians (the Muwahiddin) were among the most powerful of the formative influences on the Rajah's mental growth." The influence of the moral precepts of Jesus also was quite considerable. His respect for Christianity is evident when he writes, "Genuine Christianity is more conducive to the moral, social and political progress of a people than any other known creed." His faith in the Vedas, the inspiration that he got from the monotheism of the Upanishads are only too well-known to be discussed in detail. But he failed to be appreciated or understood by the orthodox Moslems, the Christian missionaries and the orthodox Hindu community. His criticism of the sternness of Islam towards the 'non-believers' offended the Moslems. By rejecting Trinitarianism and the miracles of Christianity he courted the displeasure of the missionaries. And of course by denouncing image worship and rejecting the Puranas and the later Sastras, by raising his voice against the prevailing social customs and usages he antagonised the orthodox Hindu community. It must be remembered, however, that the Raja never called himself anything but a Hindu and he sought to defend Hinduism from the vehement attacks of the Christian missionaries. To vindicate Hinduism he started along with Bhabanicharan the *Sambad Kaumudi*. But later differences grew between the two, as Bhabanicharan disliked the reforming activities and views of Rammohun.

It can hardly be doubted that contemporary world events had an effect on his mind. During his lifetime had taken place the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon; and the Industrial Revolution in England was in progress. The works of Bacon, Locke, the Deists of England, the French Philanthropists and Encyclopaedists, Tom Paine and Hume had a profound influence on him. In some of his works are found quotations from Western writers and references are found to Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire and others. According to the accounts of Keats Clarence, a contemporary traveller who met Rammohun in 1817-1818, the latter often recited passages from Locke and Bacon. In matters of law one can discern the influence of Blackstone.

Rammohun was a theoretician and at the same time a practician. The earlier years of his life were spent in exploring different branches of knowledge. These were the formative years on his life. But later he started his life's work and tried to put all his knowledge into practical life. He turned "from theory to practice, from doctrine to institution, from polemics to reform." This brings in an interesting and important point of discussion. Miss Collect, the famous biographer of Rammohun writes, "He was above all and beneath all a religious personality. The many and far-reaching manifestations of his prolific energy were forth-puttings of one purpose. The root of his life was religion". This view has been shared by other writers. But this is seriously contended by some scholars on very good grounds. No doubt religious views and activities occupied an important part in his life. He thoroughly studied different religious doctrines and tried to work out what is called 'Universal Religion'. For this Max Muller called him "The Father of Comparative Theology" and Monier Williams hailed him as "The first really earnest investigator in the science of comparative theology". But Rammohun does not appear to have studied different religious philosophy for the sake of acquiring religious merit or for quenching his thirst of religious knowledge. He did so with a specific purpose—to use his knowledge for the welfare of humanity. He

wanted to reform the Hindu religion as he thought this to be essential for an effective defence against the Christian missionary attacks and for the revival and progress of the country. He frankly admitted that "some change should take place in their (Hindu) religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort." Rammohun was not the founder or prophet of a new religion. Unfortunately, he is too often identified exclusively with the Brahmo movement, thus tending to ignore the other spheres of his activities. Even the Brahmo Samaj he wanted to be a meeting place for all people, irrespective of their differences. We have it from the authority of Miss Mary Carpenter that the Raja often wished that on his tomb should be inscribed the quotation from the Persian poet, "The true way of serving God, is to do good to man." This is exactly what he tried to do—Religion wedded to the service of mankind.

The whole life of Rammohun bears the stamp of courage and boldness, unflagging zeal for fighting for what he thought to be right and good for his countrymen. As a strict man of reason and intellect he never allowed himself to be carried away by emotional or sentimental outbursts. He was always cool and calculated and never lost his temper or sense of decency even under the greatest provocation. One of the most deadly weapons in his armoury was his power to argue and win his point against the most difficult of adversaries. On this the '*Court Journal*' wrote in 1833, "He seemed to grapple with truth intuitively and called in invective, raillery, sarcasm, and sometimes a most brilliant wit, to aid him in confuting his opponents...and at times with a rough unsparing, ruthless hand he burst asunder the meshes of sophistry, error and bigotry in which it might be attempted to entangle him."

Though mainly concerned with the problems of India and her future, Rammohun, as we have seen, was quite aware of international affairs, and contemporary ideological conflicts affected him and made him think on those issues. Rammohun can truly be regarded as the first modern Asian to be known and to have exercised atleast some influence both in Europe and in America. We know from the work

of Miss A. Moore that Rammohun's works on religion were to be found in almost all the major American public libraries and before him "there was no sign of any influence of Oriental Philosophy on the American mind." She further states that his thoughts had considerable influence on American Transcendentalism.

By far the most important evidence of his liberal and almost prophetic view on international relations is his letter written to the Foreign Minister of France protesting against restrictions imposed on an intending foreign visitor to that country. In this letter he strongly resented all barriers to intercourse between nations of the world and asserted that "all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches." The most remarkable feature of the letter was his idea of a Congress for settling political or other disputes. "By such a Congress" he urged, "all matters of difference whether political or commercial... might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation." In these lines, one may rightly say, he was anticipating the League of Nations that was formed nearly a century later and was suggesting the scheme for an International Court of Justice.

Analysing the part played by Rammohun, Dr. Brajendranath Seal rightly found two essentially distinct but equally indispensable features. Firstly, Rammohun the cosmopolitan, rationalist thinker with a universal outlook on human civilization who calmly, fearlessly, truthfully, "probed, fathomed, dissected". Secondly, Rammohun the rationalist reformer, the social reformer, the renovator of national scriptures and revelations.

There are, however, scholars who while accepting him as the pioneer Indian of intellect, free-thinking, and courage who stirred the people to action, point out some of his limitations. These are, firstly, his religious reform was sectarian and artificial. He failed to realise the real spirit of the Hindu religion and his religious views and interpretations

were marked by confusion and contradiction. Secondly, he did not envisage a national education and thus did not foresee the future. Thirdly, his political views were unimaginative. He could not get rid of or rise above his English way of thinking which he mostly imitated. He also could never abandon his faith in the English sense of justice and liberalism. He has also been dubbed as an intellectual who was mainly the leader of the "higher classes in the society."

Scholars are generally unanimous in holding that Rammohun's religious views, expositions and interpretations of the Hindu scriptures have their flaws and limitations. But one can hardly substantiate the charge of sectarianism against him. The other criticisms do not stand the test of historical analysis but rather reflect a nationalist bias. As we shall see later, he considered Western education essential for the regeneration of India. It has rightly been said that his letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 alone would have earned for him a place in history. He laid the path of constitutional agitations in India and political consciousness in the country originated from him. The discussions and interviews which he had with Jacquemont, Sandford Merton, Crawford and others, unmistakably reveal his vision of a free India after a period of British tutelage. Rammohun was a very practical man and not a visionary. Moreover, in those days, he could not possibly be an advocate of an Independent India.

It is quite true that the Raja did not or could not act as a leader of the people in general, and the movements he started lacked a sound foundation among the masses. But it is to be borne in mind that he was a pioneer and like many other pioneers in history he was little understood or admired in his own time or indeed even to-day. But his deep love of the people and his sincere efforts for their all-round uplift must be acknowledged without reservation. It is said that in England, while at church, he often used to shed tears. When he was asked the reason for this, he replied that the thought of his poor countrymen gave him no rest. The Select Committee of the House of Commons invited him to appear before it. He declined the request but gave his views on Indian problems in the form of *Communications*

*to the Board of Control*. In the part dealing with the revenue system he discussed at length the miserable condition of the peasants and suggested remedies for its improvement. In these *Communications* he appears not merely as the champion of the upper classes but as "the tribune of the toiling and oppressed poor". The movement for the abolition of *Sati* and the agitation for the political rights of the people were certainly not for the benefit of any particular class in society.

In conclusion we may say that Rammohun like all other historical personages had his limitations and fallibilities. But he occupies a unique position in the history of renaissance India—as the harbinger of a new age, the only man of his time fully to realise its significance. All the principal movements of the nineteenth century—social, religious, political, educational or otherwise—originated from him. None of these movements can be studied without a reference to the part played by him. His life and thought were the symbol of a great synthesis—a connected life-current between the East and the West. It is said that Rammohun was born in India much before his age. But we would say that he came just at the right moment to be the torch-bearer for his countrymen. By his boldness and courage, his dynamic personality, the freedom of his spirit and his great wisdom and foresight he led the country to a new world. He belongs, as Rabindranath observed, "to the lineage of India's great seers, who age after age have appeared in the arena of our history with the message of Eternal Man."

## CHAPTER III

### CONSERVATIVE REACTION : YOUNG BENGAL

Even in his early days in Rungpore Rammohun Roy had raised a storm of controversy and he was severely criticised by the orthodox Hindus. The orthodox group led by Gaurikanta Bhattacharya organized counter-meetings to uphold orthodox Hinduism. Rammohun carried the storm with him to Calcutta. Conservatism had a firm root in all sections of the people in every sphere of life, and even Rammohun failed to win over the whole or even a majority of the people to his cause. His views on religion and *Sati* in particular set in a sharp reaction against him. The orthodox Hindu community organized itself in defence of Hindu religion and practices under the patronage of Raja Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867) of Sobhabazar. The other stalwarts of this group were Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, Ramkamal Sen, Gopimohon Deb, Ramgopal Mallik, Tarinicharan Mitra, Maharaja Kalikrishna Deb, Kasinath Tarkapanchanan etc. Religion and social reforms were the main subjects of controversy. Rammohun's monotheism, denouncing of the image worship and the Puranic cult and the anti-*Sati* agitation infuriated the conservatives. Most of the leading conservatives were very influential and monied men and confronted Rammohun with a mighty opposition. As a counter-blast to Rammohun's journal the *Sambad Kaumudi*, the conservatives started their paper *Samachar Chandrika* in 1822. The editor of the *Samachar Chandrika* was Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay. He was at first an admirer and associate of Rammohun in defending Hindu religion from the Christian missionary attacks. But later he disagreed with Rammohun and severed all connections with him and became one of the staunch adversaries of the latter. The *Samachar Chandrika* was the chief organ of the conservatives. In 1823 Krishnamohan Das published a weekly named *Sambad Timirnasak* which also supported the orthodox views.



Orthodox reaction also found expression in the writings of Bhabanicharan, Kasinath Tarkapanchanan and later in the poems of Iswarchandra Gupta.

In 1823 the *Gaudia Samaj* was founded with the object of the cultivation of learning and knowledge among the natives. The *Samaj* accepted Hindu social customs and usages. Rasomoy Dutta made it very clear in the beginning that if the *Samaj* had anything to do with politics or criticism of the Sastras the conservatives would have nothing to do with it. All the leading conservatives of Calcutta society were its members. But one is rather surprised to find the names of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore, Tarachand Chakravarty—all admirers of Rammohun—as members of the *Samaj*. Apparently it did not have the exclusively orthodox colour of the *Dharma Sabha* which was founded a few years later. Social problems and social improvements were discussed and the Vedas were recited in its meetings.

The acceleration of the movement for the abolition of *Sati* and the rise of ultra-radicalism among the students of the Hindu College intensified the conservative reaction against the new trend. The situation reached its climax with the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. The orthodox dislike for Rammohun increased and his views and principles were denounced almost with vengeance. He became the subject of talk everywhere, in streets, markets, in private houses and even in schools. Rammohun had been practically excommunicated in his own village by his neighbours and relatives. In Calcutta he had to face all sorts of attacks and abuses in public, and even his life was in danger. Ribald songs about him became very widespread and were sung even by street urchins. Even in schools boys were divided into two groups and argued excitedly often ending in blows. The vexatious law suits in which Rammohun got entangled were, according to many, due to this feeling against him.

The abolition of *Sati* in 1829 and the excesses of the students of the Hindu College alarmed Hindu society and

caused great concern. With the object of defending orthodox Hinduism and Hindu society the *Dharma Sabha* was founded in 1830. Its President was Raja Radhakanta Deb and Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay was its Secretary. The *Dharma Sabha* opposed the Order for the abolition of *Sati* with all its might, but it ultimately proved futile.

It is necessary to understand the real nature of the conservative reaction and attitude of some of its leaders. It would be unfair to condemn them as out-and-out reactionaries. Orthodox Hinduism and Hindu society at that time was attacked by the Christian missionaries, Rammohun and his adherents and the ultra-radicals of the Hindu College. It was only natural to expect a resistance from the orthodox community against such an onslaught. In attempting to do so they defended anything and everything that was known as Hinduism. They did this as they thought it to be the only way of saving the country from the disintegrating forces at work. But it must be remembered that even some of the conservatives welcomed Western education. Radhakanta Deb, the leader of the conservatives, was in favour of Western education, women's education and medical education. He supported the Temperance Society founded in later years. He was a benefactor of the Hindu College, a member of the School Book Society and one of the Secretaries of the School Society. Himself a Sanskrit scholar, he was not intolerent of other religions but was opposed to any criticism of Hindu religion and practices. It is worth mentioning that in his Memorial in 1867, Rev. K. M. Banerjee, one of the fire-brand ultra-radicals said that a man "can only be compared with his own contemporaries. Judged by such a standard, the Rajah would certainly appear not behind, but in advance of his equals in age." Even Ramkamal Sen another die-hard conservative, was not blind to all the dreadful prevailing customs. Pearychand Mitra writes, "The first person who condemned in Calcutta the practice of carrying the dying to the river was Rammohun Roy. The practice of plunging the dying person into water in the hope that the soul purified by the Ganges may ascend to heaven, was condemned by Ram Comul, who

called it 'Ghut-Murder'". Ramkamal was also a great scholar and was a member of the Hindu College Committee. In later years many of the people belonging to the conservative group joined hands with the others in making a common front against Government encroachments on the rights and privileges of the people.

Thus one must be aware of the cross-currents in the country in assessing the role of the orthodox Hindu community. The welfare of the country was in their minds, but their main drawback was that they failed to realise the force of the historical changes that were taking place in the country. The impact of Western contact and English education was felt in every sphere of life and the conservatives tried to oppose it almost irrationally. They were trying to prevent the coming storm by shutting the doors and windows, and found themselves fighting a losing battle.

In the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century the whole of Bengal was being stormed by a great upheaval in religious, social, educational and all other aspects of life, which was caused by a clash of conflicting forces—the Christian missionaries, Rammohun and the moderate reformers and the conservatives. Indeed the country was in the wake of an impending change and a historic conflict between the Old and the New was taking place and the fuel was added to the fire by the rise of the ultra-radicals—the Young Bengal movement.

### **Young Bengal :**

The Young Bengal movement owed its origin to one of the most remarkable personalities of the nineteenth century—Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831).

Derozio was born in Calcutta in 1809 in a Portuguese-Indian family. His father was an officer in an English mercantile firm. Derozio was educated in Drummond's School. Drummond, a Scotsman, was a poet, scholar and free-thinker of some repute. He was greatly influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and had great faith in English Radicalism. Derozio was naturally influenced by Drummond,

who largely moulded the character of his prodigious student. Derozio remained at Drummond's school till he was fourteen.

After leaving the school, Derozio worked as a clerk in his father's office. After sometimes he went to Bhagalpur and stayed there with his aunt. There he composed a number of poems and wrote a criticism of Kantian philosophy worthy of "a gifted philosopher". Of the poems composed by him in Bhagalpur the most outstanding was the *Fakir of Jhungeera*. He began to contribute regularly to Dr. Grant's *India Gazette* and soon earned the admiration of its readers for his free-thinking and gifted-intellect. He also made an intense study of English literature.

In 1826 he came to Calcutta to publish a collection of his poems and got an appointment in the Hindu College as a teacher to the senior classes. Besides being a teacher in the Hindu College, Derozio edited the *Hesperus* and the *Calcutta Literary Gazette*. He was also connected with the *India Gazette*, and wrote in the *Calcutta Magazine*, the *Indian Magazine*, the *Bengal Annual* and the *Kaleidoscope*.

Derozio drew round him the students of the Hindu College like a magnet and began to exercise unprecedented influence over his pupils both in and outside the class. The students had free access to his house and they spent hour after hour in conversation with him. His method of teaching was quite new and remarkable. He encouraged the students to debate freely and question all authority. He sought to convince his students of the need of free-thinking and not to be influenced by any of the idols mentioned by Bacon. He urged them "to live and die for truth—to cultivate and practise all the virtues, shunning vice in every shape." He often cited examples from ancient history to impress on his students the supreme value of justice, philanthropy, self-abnegation, patriotism, and truth. He gave the greatest impetus to free discussion on all subjects—social, moral and religious. The students began to adore Derozio and opened their minds to him on all matters both academic and personal. There grew up a fellowship of affection and friendship between the teacher and the taught which ushered

in a new era in the Hindu College. Derozio immortalized this relationship in a beautiful poem in which he wrote :

Expanding like the petals of young flowers  
I watch the gentle opening of your minds  
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds  
Your intellectual energies and powers.

What joyance rains upon me when I see  
Fame in the mirror of futurity  
Weaving the chaplets you have yet to gain,  
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.

The most favourite students of Derozio were Krishnamohun Banerjee, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Ramgopal Ghose, Madhab Chandra Mallik, Ramtanu Lahiri, Maheschandra Ghose, Sibchandra Deb, Harachandra Ghose, Radhanath Sikdar, Govindachandra Bysack, Amritalal Mitra and others. These students came to meet him during tiffin time, after the college hours, at his house and became very friendly with the members of his family. They were the most brilliant students of the Hindu College and were inspired and intoxicated by a spirit of free-thought and revolt against the existing social and religious structure of the Hindu society. Their uppermost thought was to expose Hinduism, and to renounce it. As a mark of emancipation from old and decaying traditions they exulted in taking beef and drinking wine. This they regarded as a yard stick to measure their freedom from any religious customs and prejudices and a measure to break social fetters. Madhab Chandra Mallik wrote in the College magazine, "if there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our heart, it is Hinduism." Rasik Krishna Mallik declared in the open Court, "I do not believe in the sacredness of the Ganges." Such startling assertions and such a way of living shocked society.

In 1828 Derozio founded with his students the *Academic Association*. They also started a magazine—the *Parthenon* (according to some it was named the *Athenaeum*). The Association used to organize debates on various subjects.

Derozio was President of the Association, Umacharan Bose was Secretary. All the favourite students of Derozio were its members. Various subjects were debated in the meetings of the Association. Giving an account of the Association, Edwardes, the biographer of Derozio writes, "Free-will, foreordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, and the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the attributes of God, and the argument for and against the existence of deity as these have been set forth by Hume on the one side, and Reid, Dugald Stewart and Brown on the other, the hollowness of idolatry and the shams of the priesthood were subjects which stirred to their very depths the young, fearless, hopeful hearts of the leading Hindoo youths of Calcutta." In general the discussions that were held in the *Academic Association* were a pronounced revolt against and attack on Hindu religion and society and, as Rev. Lalbihari Dey writes, "The Young lions of the Academy roared out, week after week—Down with Hinduism, Down with orthodoxy." The meetings of the *Academic Association* were very well attended and a number of distinguished men were often present. Among them were the Chief Justice Sir Edward Ryan, Col. Benson, Col. Beatson, the Principal of the Bishop's College, Dr. Mills and David Hare.

The impetus to free-thought and the spirit of enquiry roused by Derozio led to the foundation of numerous debating clubs all over Calcutta. Haramohan Chatterjee, the College clerk at the time, left a very interesting account of these debating clubs and their activities which has been quoted by Edwardes. As they help to understand the growing trend of ultra-radicalism among the young generation and the nature of their principles and activities it will be worth while to quote that account in some detail. "The most glowing harangues were made at Debating Clubs which were then numerous. The Hindu religion was denounced as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings. The degraded state of the Hindus formed the topic of many debates ; their ignorance and superstition were declared to be the causes of such a state, and it was then

resolved that nothing but a liberal education could enfranchise the minds of the people. The degradation of the female mind was viewed with indignation."

The students of Derozio made an intense study of Western literature and drew their inspiration from them. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the works of Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Tom Paine etc. began to be imported to Calcutta. Advertisement of these books appeared in the *Calcutta Gazette*, *Morning Post*, *Calcutta Chronicle* and other magazines. Among such books, the most popular were Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* and *Rights of Man*. Duff writes that from one ship a thousand copies of the *Age of Reason* were landed. These at first sold at one rupee per copy. Then with the increase of demand the price rose and after a few months they were sold at the rate of rupees five per copy. The young educated Bengalis were profoundly influenced by these works and in their debates and discussions they quoted extensively from Western writers. In matters of history they cited Robertson and Gibbon, in politics Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, in science Newton and Davy, in religion Hume and Tom Paine and in matters of philosophy Locke, Reid, Stewart and Brown. The most striking feature of these debates and discussions was the spirit of freedom which permeated them.

Within a very short time Derozio's influence on the students increased beyond imagination. His influence on them was so great that "they would not move even in their private concerns without his counsel and advice... He fostered their taste in literature; taught the evil effects of idolatry and superstition; and so far formed their moral conceptions and feelings, as to place them completely above the antiquated ideas and aspirations of the age." The Derozian influence gradually began to spread among students of other institutions, until it pervaded the house of almost every advanced student. It is said that many students renounced the sacred thread. Some gave up their daily prayers and when forced to do so recited from Iliad instead of the sacred *mantras*. Some went even further. They shouted at orthodox Brahmins, "We take beef", and one

student was reported in the paper to have greeted the image of Goddess *Kali* with "Good morning, madam." It is no wonder that the excesses of the young students alarmed and shocked contemporary society. Rumours about Derozio and his students began to spread in the city and caused a stir. The orthodox organs like the *Samachar Chandrika* and *Sambad Prabhakar* launched a vigorous assault on the ultra-radicals and called them "atheist beasts" following the "vagabond Firingis." The Government Regulation against the *Sati* (1829), and the foundation of the Brahmo Church (1830) further alarmed orthodox society and led to the foundation of the *Dharma Sabha*. The *Dharma Sabha* vociferously protested against the radical trend and the changes that had been sought to be introduced. The conflict between the Old and the New was now in full swing. The *Dharma Sabha* because of its clamorous protest earned the nickname 'Gurum Sabhu' and the *Academic Association*, with its comparatively colder approach, became known as 'Sital Sabha'.

It was in the midst of the storm that Alexander Duff, the famous Scottish missionary, came to Calcutta. He viewed the scene with mingled feelings of joy and fear. Rev. Lalbihari Dey writes in his *Recollections of Alexander Duff*, "He witnessed the revolution which the minds of the intelligent youth of the city were undergoing: the wildness of their views; the reckless innovations they were introducing; the infidel character of their religious opinion; and the spirit of unbounded liberty, or rather licentiousness, which characterised their speculations." The cause of Duff's joy was that he expected it to be easier to preach Christianity to the students of the Hindu College who had lost their faith in the ancestral religion. The cause of his fear was that many students had become or were becoming sceptics and others atheists. He was enthused to find that Hinduism which was "from the base to its highest pinnacle, a citadel of error" had been subverted in the minds of the advanced students. But, to his regret, "nothing better was attempted or allowed to be substituted in its room." With that in mind he organized a series of meetings on Christianity near the Hindu College. The first lecture was delivered by Rev. Hill in 1830.



This caused sensation and great alarm in Hindu society and raised an uproar. The Hindu College authorities passed an order forbidding the students of the College from attending any lecture or meeting, specially on religion. The order came in for sharp criticism from many quarters but the Committee remained firm on its decision.

The College Committee had already taken measures to check the growth of ultra-radical tendencies in the College. The Head Master Mr. D'Anseleme had been requested "to check as far as possible all disquisitions tending to unsettle the belief of the boys in the great principles of national religion." The teachers of the College had been asked to abstain from any discussion on the Hindu religion with the students and from practising anything inconsistent with the Hindu notions of propriety, such as eating or drinking in the school or class rooms. These measures to some extent pacified the guardians and Hindu society in general. But the teachings of Derozio still continued to cause consternation. The *Samachar Chandrika* wrote in 1831 (26 April) that out of about 450 to 460 students of the Hindu College nearly 200 had left the College and many other guardians were thinking of taking away their wards from the institution. At last, at the instance of Ramkamal Sen, the Hindu College authorities, considering Derozio as "the root of all evils and the cause of Public alarm", decided to dismiss him. At first he was sought to be dismissed as "an improper person to be entrusted with the education of youth". Hare and Wilson opposed the resolution and this could not be passed in the Committee. But subsequently it was resolved by majority vote to dismiss him, in view of the "present state of public feeling amongst the Hindoo Community". Wilson and Hare abstained from voting and another member, Srikrishna Sinha, considered the step "unnecessary".

On being informed of the decision of the College Committee Derozio wrote a letter to Dr. Wilson, and also submitted his letter of resignation to the Committee on 25 April 1831, remarking that "unbiased, unexamined and unheard, you resolve to dismiss me without even a mockery of a trial." In reply to this letter Dr. Wilson wrote to him pointing out

sition is violent and insurmountable, let us rather aspire to martyrdom than desert a single inch of the ground we have possessed. A people can never be reformed without noise and confusion..." He also wrote a drama—*The Persecuted*—in which he sought to expose "the heterodoxy of the Hindus who passed as members of the orthodox community and showed that there was no such thing as caste after all." Before the stir had subsided the news appeared that Mahesh Chandra Ghose has embraced Christianity and it was soon followed by the conversion of Krishnamohun himself to the Christian faith. It is no wonder that apprehension gained ground that all the senior students of the Hindu College were going to be converted. The missionaries were also much elated by the conversion of Krishnamohun. But the apprehension ultimately proved unfounded and the missionaries could not achieve much success in this direction.

To propagate their ideas of social and political reform the students of the Hindu College started a number of journals and founded Associations. Among the Societies was the *Academic Association* founded by Derozio himself in 1828. This Association, whose activities we have already noticed, continued up to 1839. Another important organization of these students was the *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge* founded in 1838. The President of the Society was Tarachand Chakravarty, Ramgopal Ghose was its Vice-President and its Secretaries were Pearychand Mitra and Ramtanu Lahiri. The object of the Society was to acquire and spread useful knowledge. The Society published the papers read in its meetings between 1840 and 1843 in three volumes. These included articles on 'The Nature of Historical Studies and Civil and Social Reform' by Krishnamohun Banerjee, 'Interests of the Female Sex' and 'The State of Hindustan' by Pearychand Mitra, 'Sketch of Bankura' by Harachandra Ghose, 'Notice of Tipperah', 'New Spelling Book', 'Notices of Chittagong' by Govindachandra Bysack. One meeting of the Society deserves a special mention. It was held on 8 February, 1843 in the Hindu College hall in which Dakshinaranjan Mukherji read a paper on 'The Present State of the East India Company's Criminal

Judicature, and Police under the Bengal Presidency.' When the paper was being read, D. L. Richardson, the Principal of the College asked Dakshinaranjan to stop reading, as he considered the article to contain seditious remarks. But the Chairman of the meeting Tarachand Chakravarty firmly ruled him out and asked him to apologize to the writer and to the Society. Henceforward the Derozians were called as Chuckerbutty Faction.<sup>1</sup> It may be of interest to note here that some scholars ascribe the Young Bengal excesses after the death of Derozio to Capt. Richardson, whose teaching, they argue, roused a spirit of free-thought among the students. Richardson was a very successful teacher no doubt, but such an assertion seems baseless. Besides Derozio, there was only one man who exercised influence on the Hindu College students—David Hare.

The Derozians also founded a Circulating Library and an Epistolary Association. The members used to read books of the Library and then corresponded with their friends on the books read. Ramgopal Ghose and Ramtanu Lahiri mainly looked after these two organizations. Other Societies deserving mention in this connection are the Hindu Theophilanthropic Society found in 1814 by Kisorichand Mitra and the short lived Mechanical Institute founded in 1839. Many of the Derozians joined the Bengal British India Society (1843), which we shall discuss in detail later.

Quite a few journals were run by the Derozians to propagate their views between 1828 and 1843. Among these were the *Parthenon*, *Hesperus*, *Jnananveshan*, *Enquirer*, *Hindu Pioneer*, *Quill* and the *Bengal Spectator*. Only one issue of the *Parthenon* came out in 1830 after which it was discontinued owing to the opposition of the guardians of the students. In its only issue the paper advocated the cause of 'colonization' and female education. Hindu orthodoxy and superstition were condemned. It also pleaded for cheap justice. Derozio was connected with the *Hesperus*

<sup>1</sup> According to some, Mr. Marshman, the editor of the *Friend of India* first called them the Chuckerburty Faction. But we have it from the authority of Sibnath Sastri that it was Richardson who gave them the name. (*Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Banga Samaj*, p. 144).

while he was serving in the Hindu College. The *Jnananveshan* was one of the main organs of the Derozians. It had a longer life, starting in 1831 and continuing up to 1844. It was a bilingual journal organized by Rasik Krishna Mallik. Its object was the instruction of the people in the science of Government and jurisprudence. The *Enquirer*, as has already been stated, was started by Krishnamohun Banerjee in 1831. The *Hindu Pioneer* was started in 1838. This journal published articles which marked a growth of political consciousness among the Young Bengal men. The *Quill*, run by Tarachand Chakravarty, also was critical of the Government. The *Bengal Spectator* was perhaps the last of the Young Bengal journals. It was started in 1842 and contained articles on social, political and economic problems of the period.

In the forties of the nineteenth century the Young Bengal movement became closely connected with the growing political consciousness in the country. The Bengal British India Society (1843) and the British Indian Association (1851) owed much to these rebel alumni of Hindu College, though by then the Young Bengal had practically ceased as a movement.

The Young Bengal movement is one of the most controversial phases of the Bengal Renaissance. The Derozians have earned both unstinted praise and outright condemnation. The trend of ultra-radicalism was evinced even during Rammohun's own life-time. It was Rammohun who heralded the New Age and drew the attention of the people towards Western ideas and Western learning. But, while welcoming the New ideas, he never totally denounced the Old. Synthesis of the Old and New, of East and West, was the characteristic feature of the Raja's life. The Derozians, however, did not agree with Rammohun's ideas. They contemptuously dubbed his movement as "coming as far as half the way in religion and politics." Rammohun himself did not approve the radical views and youthful excesses of the Derozians. They in general offended his sense of decency and religious idealism. It is, however, interesting to note that most of the works started by Rammohun were taken

up by the Derozians after the former had left for England. In the memorial meeting of Raja Rammohun held in the Calcutta Town Hall in 1834 the Derozians participated and Rasik Krishna Mallik was one of the chief speakers in the meeting. Indeed, the most unrelenting critic of the Young Bengal must admit that they were connected with all the principal movements of the period and took the initiative in all progressive activities.

The Derozians were connected with the efforts made for the introduction of Western medical education in the country, which ultimately led to the foundation of the Medical College in Calcutta in 1835. They also encouraged the students of the Medical College to conquer the prevailing prejudice against dissecting dead bodies and thus removed an obstacle from its path of rapid progress. In 1836 the Calcutta Public Library was founded. Derozians were much elated and frequently visited the Library and made use of it. Pearychand Mitra was the first Indian on the staff of the Library. In 1839 at the instance of Adam (the friend and associate of Rammohun) the British India Society was founded in England. Its object was to inform the British public of the grievances of the Indians. Ramgopal Ghose and others encouraged and had regular correspondence with Adam, to whom they gave moral and probably also financial help for the success of the Society. In the same year was founded the *Bangla Pathshala* for the education of children. In this matter the Derozians were inspired by Hare to take the initiative. One of the major activities started by Rammohun and continued by the Derozians was the movement for the freedom of the Press. Rammohun, who had first started the movement in 1823, did not live to see its success. But the movement continued in the eighteen thirties and in 1834 a petition was submitted to the Government against the restrictions on the Press. A meeting was held in this connection which was addressed among others by Rasik Krishna Mallik. The movement was crowned with success when Lord Metcalfe restored the freedom of the Press in 1835. This was a major success of the Derozians.

In all their good works the Derozians always received

the warm support and co-operation of David Hare. As Prof. S. C. Sarkar aptly remarks, "It will be unusual to link with Young Bengal a second name, that of David Hare (1775-1841) who seems so different from Derozio in so many ways, yet between the two may be detected an underlying resemblance which furnishes a key to a proper estimation of Young Bengal." Realisation of the great need of Western learning and sciences among the people, encouragement of free-thinking and discussion, throwing away of all fetters and prejudices, secularism and idealism were the basic similarities between Hare and Derozio, who were in other ways so different from each other. Hare, in a sense the founder of the Hindu College, was a great admirer of Derozio's method of teaching and was against the move to dismiss him. He smilingly withstood the violent outburst of the Head Master D'Anselme, who had called him "a vile sycophant". Hare had asked Derozio to deliver a number of public lectures on metaphysics at his school. The lectures were very well attended. Though Hare ultimately could not prevent his dismissal he always remained a great admirer of Derozio and his brilliant students. In all his activities—in the introduction of Medical education, in the Appeal against Press Regulations (1835), in the demand for the extension of the Jury System (1835), in his fight against the "export of coolies" to Mauritius (1838), in the foundation of the school for children (1839), Hare always received the all-out support of the Derozians. Hare's public and private virtues profoundly impressed them, and inspired them to greater activities. The Derozians hailed Hare as the "morning star" to dispel the ignorance of the people, and in recognition of his great services arranged a public reception in his honour (1831). In his reply to the address of welcome Hare expressed great satisfaction at the success of Western education in Bengal and, addressing the students of the Hindu College, said, "Your countrymen look upon you as their reformers and instructors." Hare was indeed "the benefactor, guide, and friend of an entire generation," and his death on 1 June, 1841 cast a shadow of gloom over the country and was mourned by one and all. The name of David Hare remained,

to be remembered with veneration and love for generations to come.

With the passing of time and the growth to maturity of the Derozians their youthful exuberance and excesses waned and the good practical effects of Derozio's teaching became evident among his students. Krishnamohun Banerjee's volcanic outbursts were followed by understanding, wisdom and calmness which did much to promote the welfare of the people, and he came to be revered by all. Ramtanu Lahiri became a symbol of kindness, integrity, devotion to work, and above all morality. As Pearychand Mitra wrote, "There are few persons in whom the milk of human kindness flows so abundantly. He was never wanting in his appreciation of what was right, and in his sympathy with advanced principles." Radhanath Sikdar, whose "hobby" was beef, always had the country in his mind. He believed that for the improvement of the Bengalis the essential things needed were better physique and morals simultaneously. Chandrasekhar Deb, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Sibchandra Deb, Govindachandra Bysack and Madhab Chandra Mallik were all appointed as Deputy Collectors and were reputed for their ability and honesty. Harachandra Ghose was appointed as a Munsif at Bankura and became renowned for his love of justice. Everywhere in Bankura he was revered as a good Judge and a godly man. This was remarkable in view of the fact that in those days corruption pervaded the lower grades of the Judicial service and there was so much opportunity for earning a fortune. Ramgopal Ghose was in the forefront of the political agitation that shook the country a few years later and for his oratory earned the name of 'the Indian Demosthenes.' Pearychand Mitra occupies an esteemed place in the history of the Bengali literature. All other Derozians in some way or other contributed to the Bengal Renaissance. Sibnath Sastri has narrated the story of a Sannyasi in Kathiwar who condemned the misrule in that state and wrote a number of letters to the press on 'Misgovernment at Kathiwar'. For this he was imprisoned, but was later released and was entrusted with the administration of the State, which he carried out with great suc-

cess. But after some time he was faced with a reactionary movement and was expelled from the country. This Sannyasi always referred to Derozio as his teacher and had great respect for him. Unfortunately, the Sannyasi has remained unidentified and the historicity of the episode has not yet been established.

The Young Bengal movement faded away by the middle of the nineteenth century and proved "something ephemeral and unsubstantial. They failed to develop any movement outside their own charmed circle and the circle itself could hardly keep any significant form." Gradually most of the Derozians became engaged in different occupations. The new Charter Act of 1833 opened responsible Government posts to Indians and many brilliant alumni of the Hindu College got appointments as Deputy Collectors and Munsifs. The radical group had always remained mainly confined to a small number of students of the Hindu College. The very nature of the Young Bengal movement was responsible for its ultimate failure. It has been rightly remarked that "Radical politics of a Western type were hardly possible in Bengal a century ago." Another interesting analysis of the causes of the failure of the Derozians has been made by Bipin Chandra Pal. The Rationalism and Individualism of the eighteenth century were ill defined and little understood even in Europe at that time. Hence, Bipin Chandra Pal argues, they had little chances of being effectively understood by the young Indians of the same period.

The failure of the Derozians has also been attributed to their inability to understand the depth of Western civilization, which dazzled them by its external garb and glamour. They have been described as the "intellectual aliens" of the age, who were blinded by the dazzling lights of Western learning and civilization and shut their eyes on Indian learning, culture and tradition. They built up a sort of Utopian idealism and exhausted themselves in trying to make it effective. Their atheism, their outright condemnation of Hindu religion and society, and their lack of understanding isolated them from the people in general. They



have been accused for their excesses and for "cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberalism through tumblers of beer."

These charges generally brought against the Derozians have been very forcefully refuted by Prof. S. C. Sarkar.<sup>1</sup> The Derozians have been unfairly condemned for extreme Anglicism. They always had the welfare of the country in their mind. Krishnamohun studied Hindu philosophy and the Sastric literature. Tarachand Chakravarty translated *Manu*. One of their main organs, the *Jnananveshan*, was conducted both in English and in Bengali. The *Masik Patrika* or the 'Monthly Magazine' was published in colloquial Bengali by Pearychand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar. Ramgopal Ghose had great admiration for the Bengali prose of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. The accusation that the Derozians were atheists, argues Prof. Sarkar, is not well founded. He accepts the view that their aim was "to summon Hinduism to the bar of their reason." This view, however, is difficult to accept. The cry of "Down with Hinduism" of the *Academic Association*, the hatred for Hinduism from the "bottom of the heart", and other similar outbursts could hardly be expected to have the desired effect on the Hindu religion. Neither can these be justified as "means of asserting the right of individual judgement in matters of established custom." There cannot be two opinions regarding the integrity of the Derozians. Their integrity is remarkably testified to by the account of the College clerk Haramohun Chatterjee when he writes: "They were all considered men of truth. Indeed, the *College boy* was a synonym for truth, and it was a general belief and saying amongst our countrymen that such a boy is incapable of falsehood because he is a *College boy*".

The real weakness of the Derozians was no doubt "the failure to build up a sustained movement and developing ideology". To this may be added their lack of synthesis and inability to temper their reasoning and intelligence

<sup>1</sup> Derozio and Young Bengal—article in the *Bipin Chandra Pal Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume* (1958).

with moderation and understanding. The Young Bengal movement was like a mighty storm that tried to sweep away everything before it. It was a storm that lashed society with a violent force causing much good and, perhaps naturally, some discomfort and distress. It was the culmination of the heat that had been mounting since the time of Ram-mohun and the ultimate storm brought with it a much desired and pleasing freshness.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROWTH OF WESTERN EDUCATION : FOUNDATION OF THE UNIVERSITIES

The introduction and growth of Western education was perhaps the most important single factor in the Indian awakening. It was "the lever which moved the mediaeval Indian world, after centuries of inertia under Muslim rule." Hence it is necessary to discuss the growth of Western education in Bengal, where it first spread among the people and largely moulded their life and thought.

At the end of the eighteenth century, as in other spheres of life, learning and education were in a decaying condition. In those days there were mainly three types of educational institutions in Bengal. Firstly, the *Tols* or institutions of Sanskrit learning. Secondly, the *Madrasas* where Arabic and Persian were taught. Thirdly, *Pathshalas* and *Makhtabs* or elementary schools. There was no dearth of primary schools in Bengal. Actually the number of such schools was about 80,000. Almost every village had a school "for the diffusion of not only 3 but 4 R's—the last R being Religion or the Ramayana." But the education imparted in these institutions and the method of teaching were very unsatisfactory. A meagre knowledge of reading, writing and accounts were all that was considered necessary. This naturally narrowed the minds of the students and did not help the growth of character or understanding. Printed books were not available. Manuscripts in prose were practically unknown. The teachers were mostly very ignorant. Coercion and physical punishment of the most inhuman nature were the most commonly used practices in making a student read or in enforcing discipline in the institutions. Most horrible experiences of their student-life have been narrated by some contemporary men of eminence.

One redeeming feature, however, was the general inclination for education. The trading and agricultural classes

went to the vernacular schools. The religious and learned classes went to the institutions of Sanskrit learning, which was generally confined to the Brahmins and to the Vaidyas. The number of *Madrasas* was not very large. But the *Madrasas* were generally well off, mainly because Persian was still the official language. Naturally, there was a general rush to learn Persian.

The *Tols* were the centres of Hindu intellectuals and Hindu learning. The scholars devoted much of their time and energy to "vain and empty subtleties, grammatical niceties and metaphysical discourses." Original thinking and aptitude for research were hardly evident. It has rightly been remarked that the reverence for the past overwhelmed the present outlook and this retarded the growth of education. The *Gurus* of the *Tols* did not take any tuition fees from the students. They mainly depended on the patronage of the princes, chieftains and wealthy persons of the locality. The economic and political changes of the second half of the eighteenth century which badly affected the great landlords of Bengal naturally affected these teachers and consequently the cause of learning.

Though the English had come to India long ago, there had been no cultural contact between the Indians and the Englishmen until the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Knowledge of a few English words was enough to earn for a man the distinction of a scholar in that language. The East India Company was not interested in the cause of education in Bengal or indeed in any other good cause. Its only concern was money. Vehemently criticising this deplorable attitude, Burke remarked on the "Young Magistrates who undertake the government and spoliation of India, animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another, wave after wave ; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetite continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting."

This callous indifference could not possibly continue for

long and in the eighties of the eighteenth century a change was noticed. In 1781 the Calcutta Madrasa was founded by Warren Hastings. In 1792 a Sanskrit College was founded at Benaras on the initiative of Jonathan Duncan the Resident of the place. Another important event was the foundation of the Asiatic Society in 1784 on the initiative of Sir William Jones. Though originally a Society exclusively for Europeans, it contributed immensely to the study of Indian civilization and antiquity and it roused a spirit of research among its members. It was, however, not until 1829 that Indians could become members of the Society.

Some Englishmen of intellect and foresight were also realising the need of education in this country. Some people in England attempted to make some provision for education at the time of the passing of the Charter Act of 1793. Among those who pleaded for it, Wilberforce was outstanding. But his efforts were in vain. Between 1792 and 1797 Charles Grant also pleaded for the spread of education in India. He too failed. The reason for the Court of Directors' apathy is not difficult to understand. The Directors were apprehensive of the consequences of the spread of education in India. Actually, one of the Directors openly expressed his fear of losing India as they did America through the folly of allowing the establishment of schools and colleges there. The 'Ignorance' of the Indians was considered by many British administrators to be essential for the domination of the country. Even as late as 1831 Sir Lionel Smith said, "The effect of education will be to do away with all the prejudices of sects and religions by which we have hitherto kept the country—the Mussalmans against Hindus, and so on; the effect of education will be to expand their minds, and show them their vast power."

In 1800 Lord Wellesley founded the Fort William College in Calcutta for training young civilians. The College was the outcome of an administrative necessity, but it served a far more important and useful purpose. In a way it prepared the ground for English education and became the meeting place of English officers and Indian

scholars. It gave a stimulus to language and literature. Up to 1817, the year of the foundation of the Calcutta School Book Society and the Vernacular Literature Society, the Fort William College printed and published a number of Bengali books by Ramram Bose, William Carey, Mritunjaya Vidyalankar, Rajiblochon Mukhopadhyay and other eminent persons. This was no mean contribution to the cause of learning in Bengal.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, "the study of the English language among Indians in Bengal ceased to be confined to clerks and interpreters." But the Government policy in general remained unchanged and the decline of learning continued. In 1811 Lord Minto made pointed reference to this and wrote: "Unless Government interposed with a fostering hand, the Revival of letters may mostly become hopeless from want of books or of persons capable of explaining them." He strongly pleaded for Government aid for the revival of the literature of the Hindus. While discussing the degeneration of the condition of education and educational institutions in the later half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, one must remember that the economic ruin, general poverty, lack of competent teachers and good text books etc. were some of the causes of such general decline. But perhaps the most important factor was the absence of any Government aid, as was bluntly pointed out by A. D. Campbell, the Collector of Bellary in his Report (1823). He stated that learning "has never flourished in any country except under the encouragement of the ruling power ... Of the 533 institutions for education now existing in the District, I am ashamed to say not one now derives any support from the State." Similar views were expressed by Mountstuart Elphinstone, Walter Hamilton and many others. It must be admitted that such bold and frank criticism by some of its own officers considerably influenced the Government to change its attitude towards the vital question of education.

The first important change in the Government's policy was made in 1813 at the time of the renewal of the Company's Charter. It was stated in the Charter that "A sum

of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." The motion was moved by R. P. Smith who had been Advocate General in Calcutta. The establishment of schools, public lectures and other institutions at different places was envisaged in the Act. A careful perusal of the letter of instructions communicated to the Bengal Government by the Court of Directors (3 June, 1814) definitely gives the impression that the money was set aside from considerations of political expediency and it was intended to be spent for the revival and patronage of Oriental learning.<sup>1</sup> However, practically nothing was done to implement the clause of the Charter Act of 1813.

There was considerable difference of opinion as to how the money provided in the Act of 1813 should be utilised. Of the various suggestions put forward, three deserve special mention. John Shakespear, a high Police officer, submitted a detailed plan of establishing what may justly be called a system of "mass education" in the Presidency of Fort William. William Carey, the famous Baptist missionary, at that time the Professor of Sanskrit and Bengali at the Fort William College, advocated the establishment of a national system of education for the poor. He was in favour of instructing Indians in European science and for the establishment of seminaries and lectures for the purpose of teaching higher branches of science. The third suggestion came from J. H. Harington of the Sadar Diwani Adalat. He wanted the Government to aid the restoration of old learning and to help its general spread. He also suggested that Western learning should be spread by establishing English schools for imparting the knowledge of European science and literature and by giving lectures and instruction in vernacular languages.

<sup>1</sup> B. D. Bose, *Education in India under East India Company*, pp. 7-12.

In 1823 the General Committee of Instruction was set up by the Government. It was entrusted with all matters concerning education. The Committee was also to suggest "such measures as it may appear expedient to adopt with a view to the better instruction of the people, the introduction of useful knowledge, including the sciences and arts of Europe." Harington was the President and H. H. Wilson was the Secretary of the Committee. Naturally, Harington's views found favour in the Committee. While dwelling on the important changes in the Government's education policy it must be made clear that the Government was least interested in mass education. Even in 1827 the Court of Directors instructed the Governor-General-in-Council to "engage in very limited undertaking" and to prefer the "superior and middle classes of the natives" from whom the Government hoped to find its employees. The main object of patronising education was to recruit men for administrative and other Government appointments. The Governments of Bengal, Madras and Bombay were finding it very expensive to educate the English Civil Servants in Indian affairs and languages. It was considered more convenient and economical to have educated Indians for lesser government posts.

Before we continue the account of the activities of the Committee of Public Instruction, we must refer to private enterprise in the field of education. India had a very high tradition of education and even in the darkest days of her history the love and veneration for learning among the people never ceased to exist. Private enterprise in the field of education became particularly noticeable with the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Serampore missionaries started a number of schools and did much for the Bengali language. They became very active after 1813. The Baptist Mission College was founded in 1818, and Bishop's College in 1819.

Among other individuals taking interest in the field was Robert May who set up a school in Chinsurah in 1814. Within a year he founded sixteen other schools in the



neighbourhood. One Joynarain Ghosal, an inhabitant of Benaras, presented a petition to the Marquess of Hastings in 1814 for establishing a school in that city. The school was founded in 1814, mainly on his initiative. It became a leading institution and rendered a very useful service to the cause of education.

A landmark in the history of the growth of Western education is the foundation of the Hindu College in 1817. Though there was no institution for imparting English education to Indians, there was a general desire among wealthy Indians to give their sons English education. Realising the growing need for such schools, a few Anglo-Indians started a number of English schools in Calcutta. Among these were the schools of Drummond, Sherburne, Martin Bowle and Arratoon Peters. The need for a well-organized institution for imparting Western education was felt among others by Raja Rammohun Roy and David Hare. Hare had come to India in 1800 as a watchmaker. But that was not his line. He fell in love with the people of this country and made the spread of modern education in Bengal his life's mission. Before 1816 he made over his business to one Mr. Grey, and a contemporary newspaper noticing the change wrote, "Old hair turned grey". From now on Hare devoted all his time and energy to his life's mission and became a close friend and associate of Raja Rammohun. Hare, feeling the need of an English school, took the initiative, contacted Rammohun and then approached Sir Edward Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court through Vaidyanath Mukherjee who used to visit high officials. Sir Hyde East viewed the suggestion with sympathy. Other leading members of Hindu society agreed to the proposal. Meetings were held at Sir Hyde East's residence and it was resolved that "an establishment be formed for the education of native youth". But the orthodox Hindus refused to have any connection with the school if Rammohun was included in the College Committee. This put Hyde East in difficulties and it seemed that the plan was going to be upset. But Hare, who knew Rammohun so well, had no hesitation in informing the

latter of the development. Rammohun at once decided to stay away from the proposed school. The Hindu College was opened on 20 January, 1817. In official records the institution was termed *Vidyalaya* for some years. From 1826 the records of the General Committee call it as the Hindu College.

Hare took great interest in the institution and was a daily visitor and advisor. The Hindu College was intended to impart secular education. The main object of the college was "the tuition of the sons of respectable Hindus in the English and Indian languages and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia." It was to have a school and an academy. Languages, History, Geography, Astronomy, Mathematics, Chemistry etc. were to be taught in the academy. The College received Government help from 1823 and H. H. Wilson was appointed the first Visitor of the College. This was the beginning of active Government participation in the cause of English education in Bengal.

There was a great dearth of good text books. To remove this difficulty Hare organized the School Book Society in 1817. The Society prepared and published the much needed text books. The School Society was founded in 1818 to establish new type of schools and to grant scholarships to deserving poor boys. The School Society did much for women's education. It started agitation for educating the womenfolk and succeeded in moving the British and Foreign School Society to take interest in women's education in Bengal. In 1821 the Foreign School Society sent out Miss Cooke, one of the pioneers of women's education in Bengal. With the support of the Church Missionary Society she founded ten girls' schools. The Bengal Ladies' Society, patronised by philanthropic Englishwomen, also founded many girls' schools in subsequent years.

The demand for English education was fast increasing and a large number of students began to go to the missionary schools. The activities of the Serampore missionaries have already been mentioned. Other Church organizations like the Calcutta Diocesan Committee, the Church Missionary Association etc. also rendered useful service. The General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland began its activities in 1823. Alexander Duff the famous missionary came to Calcutta in 1830.

While the missionaries were busy in organizing English schools, the Indians were not sitting idle. They also founded a number of schools in Calcutta. These were called pay-schools. The most popular of these schools was the Oriental Seminary founded by Gour Mohan Addy. There were also some free English schools, among which the Arpooly Path-sala was well known. The number of English schools in the district also increased. English education was becoming so popular that the School Book Society sold more than 31,000 English books in two years.

The Committee of Public Instruction at first generally followed the policy of patronising Oriental learning and also began the printing of Sanskrit and Arabic books. The bulk of the money was no doubt spent on Oriental learning but at the same time it must be admitted that it did not altogether overlook the cause of English education. The Hindu School owed its fast development in no small measure to the support of the Committee of Public Instruction. A considerable amount of money was spent on importing books and apparatus from England. But there is a tendency to overlook or minimise the contribution of the Committee of Public Instruction in view of the famous Anglicist-Orientalist controversy.

The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy reached its climax in the thirties of the nineteenth century, but the controversy may rightly be said to have begun in 1823 when the Government proposed to establish a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Raja Rammohun Roy wrote a memorable letter to Lord Amherst protesting against the Government decision to set this up.

Forcefully arguing in favour of English education, Rammohun wrote: "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian Philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the

system of the Schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning, educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus." Rammohun was very frank and perhaps a little harsh in criticising the Sanskrit system of education. But this was typical of Rammohun, the man of courage and foresight. He himself was a great Sanskrit scholar and had no little respect for Oriental learning. But it was his firm conviction that India needed Western learning for its regeneration and he boldly pleaded for what he thought to be right and necessary. There was no ultra-Anglicism in his arguments.

Rammohun's letter failed to move the Government but it was sent to the Committee of Public Instruction. Ultimately it was decided to erect one building for the Sanskrit College and the Hindu College. The Government gave Rs. 1,24,000 and Hare gave up for the benefit of the College the piece of land that he owned on the north side of the College Square. In 1825, the building was completed and it accommodated both the colleges.

The Committee of Public Instruction's policy was not approved by the Court of Directors, who were in favour of imparting "useful learning". The Directors had no respect for Oriental learning and considered that to employ persons either to teach or learn the sciences as they are found in Oriental books would be a mere "waste of time". Oriental learning, according to them, contained "a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous, and a small remainder indeed, in which utility was in any way concerned." The Committee of Public

Instruction firmly resented the contemptuous remarks and replied that "The metaphysical sciences, as found in Sanscrit and Arabic writings are, we believe, fully as worthy of being studied in those languages as in any other. The Arithmetic and Algebra of the Hindoos lead to the same result and are grounded on the same principles as those of Europe : and in the Madrissa, the Elements of Mathematical science which are taught are those of Euclid." The Committee also pleaded very strongly in favour of studying Oriental literature, Hindu and Mohammedan poetical writings, languages and law. The stand taken by the Committee was logical from many points, but their main shortcoming was that they neglected the vernacular and the teaching of the sciences and arts of Europe. They failed to realize that the ground for English education was already prepared and that there was a great demand for English education among the Bengali middle-class people. Thus their observation that "European science was neither amongst the sensible wants of the people nor in the power of the Government to bestow" was a gross misreading of the situation. It thus represented what is popularly called the ultra-Orientalist view point.

The Committee itself was now divided into two parties equally balanced. The picture, however, changed with the appointment of Macaulay as the President of the Committee. He became the leader of the Anglicists. He submitted a minute to the Governor-General's Council on 2 February, 1835. The Council approved this minute and the resolution was passed in March, 1835.

Macaulay's minute did not consider the Orientalist view point at all and the Government resolution was a triumph of ultra-Anglicism. It stated, "The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science amongst the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone." The Government decision in favour of the Anglicists was largely due to Bentinck's inclination to this view. Bentinck was very satisfied with the working of the Hindu College. This made him optimistic of the future of English education in Bengal.

He had already made English the language for diplomatic correspondence. In 1832 he had expressed his desire to facilitate the general introduction of the English language as the organ of judicial business. The general current in the country was running in favour of English education. It was making steady progress in Bombay and also in Madras. In Bengal it had taken deep roots among the eminent and the enlightened people. The rhetoric and the arguments of Macaulay of course finally swung the balance in favour of the Anglicists and it was he who gave the resolution its ultra-Anglicist form.

An analysis of the motives and objects of Macaulay and the other Anglicists is necessary before the subsequent course of development is discussed. The main weakness of Macaulay was that he knew India and Indians very little. He had no respect whatsoever for Oriental learning and literature and made the credulous remark that "A single shelf of good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." This, one must admit, was due to his colossal ignorance of the rich store of Oriental learning. Macaulay was one of those Englishmen who had in their mind the vision of a cultural conquest of India, at least of the intelligentsia. He frankly expressed his desire and said, "We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern ; a class of persons Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect." Expressing his view that English education would lead to a transformation of Hindu society Macaulay prophesied that "in forty years' time there would not be an idolator among the respectable classes of Bengal." So it does not seem that Macaulay, in arguing for English education in India, had the regeneration of the country in his mind, though his interest in the spread of education in India was genuine. There lies the basic difference between the ultra-Anglicists like Macaulay and eminent enlightened patriotic Indians like Rammohun Roy. Some scholars assert that the Anglicists wanted English education as they expected it to be an effective means of strengthening the British hold on India and

because it would supply suitable Indians for Government posts. But this was not certainly the only motive. No one could possibly expect the Anglicists to think of "a politically independent India". But they certainly had the general enlightenment and progress of the country in mind. This is evident from the evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan, one of the Anglicists in the Committee, before the Parliamentary Committee in 1853. Trevelyan said with almost prophetic accuracy, "The existing connection between two such distant countries as England and India, cannot, in the nature of things, be permanent; no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence." He expressed the hope that Western education would make the ultimate separation "gradual and peaceable" and would end in "a permanent alliance founded on mutual benefit and good will."

The Government Resolution of 1835 caused great disappointment and dissatisfaction among the Orientalists who vigorously opposed the ultra-Anglicist resolution. James Prinsep defended the policy pursued by the General Committee and presented evidence to prove that while patronising Oriental learning they had taken steps for propagating European learning and science as well. Macnaghten emphasised the need of 'moderation' and criticised the resolution as "the proclamation of a crusade against every oriental feeling and institution—an open attack upon every stronghold and redoubt." The young students of the Hindu College, however, warmly welcomed the Macaulian view point. These young enthusiasts of English education echoed the words of Macaulay in denouncing Oriental learning. In the circle of the newly educated youth Shakespeare replaced Kalidasa, Edgeworth's *Tales* took the place of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and the *Gita* and the Vedas made way for the Bible. Orthodox Hindu society became alarmed and the conflict between these ultra-radicals and the orthodox community intensified.

The Orientalists' opposition was not altogether abortive. A few thousand Hindus and Moslems presented a petition to the Government against the policy of depriving the

oriental institutions of all Government help. The Resolution of 1835 had to be modified and the "English alone" policy was abandoned. Government patronage for the cultivation of Sanskrit and Arabic continued. But English education now became the chief concern of the Government. But though the ultra-Anglicist feature of the Resolution was modified its effect on the educational developments in India was of immense importance. For, "education in India was turned into a new channel along which it has ever since mainly flowed."

A glaring defect of the Government's education policy was the complete neglect of vernacular education in the country. The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy so much engrossed the mind of the people and the Government that this vital aspect of education did not receive the serious attention it deserved. In 1835 Lord William Bentinck appointed William Adam, the friend and associate of Rammohun, to survey the state of vernacular education in Bengal. Adam did his work with great sincerity and earnestness and after an extensive tour of the province for three years submitted three reports in 1835, 1836 and 1838. These were of immense value, containing accurate informations on the state of vernacular education and valuable suggestions for its improvement. Adam criticised both the Orientalists and the Anglicists for trying to confine Governmental help to the upper and middle classes. He firmly asserted that the English could never become the universal medium of instruction in India, though he was aware of the need of spreading Western learning. Pointing out that millions of Indians can never possibly be educated with English as the medium of instruction, he stated, "It is difficult to believe that it should have been proposed to communicate to this mass of human beings through the medium of a foreign tongue all the knowledge that is necessary for their higher civilization, their intellectual improvement, their moral guidance and their physical comfort."

The Report of Adam, however, failed to influence the Government's educational policy. Vernacular education continued to be neglected and the elementary schools did not



receive the much needed State aid. The Committee of Public Instruction's awareness of the need of fostering vernacular education is clear from its Report for the year 1835. The Committee reported, "We are deeply sensible of the importance of encouraging the cultivation of the vernacular languages. We conceive the formation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed." But all these projects remained mere pious wishes and little was done to give them a practical shape. Unfortunately, even Bentinck could not do much in this direction. Bentinck's successor, Metcalfe, is well known for his foresight and liberalism. He was fully aware of the need of general spread of education among the masses and in a remarkable minute dated 16 May, 1836, he wrote, "I see so much danger in the ignorance, fanaticism and barbarism of our subjects, that I rest on the spread of knowledge some hope of greater strength and security.... It is our duty to extend knowledge whatever may be the result; and spread it would, even if we impeded it." It is a matter of pity that he too did not do anything tangible for mass education, and that learning remained confined to the upper and middle classes.

As was to be expected, the number of English schools began to increase rapidly after 1835. Among the many new institutions opened was the Hooghly College, founded in 1836. For this institution Haji Mohammad Mohsin's property provided a princely donation. This College did much for the spread of English education, particularly among the Mohammedans. There were quite a number of vernacular schools in Hooghly and Chinsurah which were under the management of the General Committee. A number of Europeans also managed some vernacular schools run on the model of the Hindu College. A great difficulty faced by these institutions was the dearth of qualified teachers. A large number of these came from the army among whom special mention may be made of Graves, Clint and D. L. Richardson.

When Lord Auckland came to India as the Governor-

General, the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy was still going on. In 1838 he gave his opinion against the demand for the revival of the stipendary system in the oriental institutions and stressed the need of replacing stipends by scholarships awarded on merit. In 1839 he proclaimed a new education policy. Grants to oriental colleges were restored. Provision for an additional fund was made. In 1840 a further grant was made for the development of the Medical College founded by Bentinck in 1835 and for awarding scholarships to meritorious students. Auckland preferred to establish a few central colleges for higher education, and was against the plan for founding district schools. Auckland's scheme of central colleges for higher education was very significant as the wider dissemination of higher education and the formation and efficient direction of upper institutions logically led to the foundation of the University.<sup>2</sup>

Auckland did not have any faith in the immediate prospect of mass education. He believed in the 'theory of filtration'. The raising of the standard of education of the higher and middle classes, he believed, would lead to beneficial changes in the society at large. He expected the libraries to be an effective means of improving the general knowledge of the students.

In pursuance of Auckland's policy, the General Committee made provision for a number of junior and senior English scholarships. The standard of scholarship examinations was very high and were regarded as the highest academic honour. Naturally, the question of giving a special mark of recognition to the successful students arose. In 1840 the General Committee recommended that "as a further encouragement some mark of distinction or scholastic degree be conferred on those meritorious youths who have passed through the senior scholarships with credit so as to distinguish them in society as men of learning." The idea of a University conferring degrees was fast developing.

In 1842 the General Committee of Public Instruction was reconstituted as the Council of Education. From 1842 to 1855 all matters concerning education were in the hands

<sup>2</sup> *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, Chapter I, p. 25.

of this Council. One of its earliest works was to take over the management of the School Society's English School at Pataldanga, managed by David Hare who had died in 1842. Another significant change that was taking place in the meantime was the replacement of Persian by English as the official language. In district administration and courts vernacular languages replaced Persian.

In 1844 Lord Hardinge established one hundred and one vernacular schools in the districts in response to "a general complaint that vernacular education was neglected, and a constant call upon the Government to do something towards extending vernacular education." But he made a great mistake by placing the schools under the District Collector, who took little interest in them. The result was that when ultimately the Council of Education took over the management of these schools their number had dwindled to only twenty eight or twenty nine.

By 1844 English had practically become the language of public business and in 1844 Lord Hardinge declared English education to be the passport to public service. This was another significant change on which H. R. James wrote, "The immediate effect of this resolution does not appear to have been great, its ultimate influence has been scarcely less than that of the adoption of English education. It has given English education its value in terms of livelihood."

The need for establishing a University for conducting the examinations and conferring degrees was increasingly felt by all those concerned in the question of education in India. One among them was Dr. Frederick John Mouat, who succeeded David Hare as Secretary of the Calcutta Medical College and was also appointed as the Secretary of the Council of Education. His work and experiences convinced him of the necessity of establishing a University in Bengal on the model of the London University.

Accordingly the Council of Education submitted a detailed plan for the proposed Calcutta University. The Committee wrote that, considering the advanced state of education in Bengal, the establishment of a University was

not only expedient and advisable but also a matter of strict justice and necessity. But the plan was rejected by the East India Company's authorities, who were still very apprehensive of its consequences.

In 1846 Henry Seton, a member of the Governor-General's Council, wrote to the President of the Board of Control urging the foundation of a University in Calcutta. But this also proved abortive.

In 1848 Lord Dalhousie became the Governor-General. He was in favour of promoting higher education and for that he thought of establishing a new general college, the Presidency College. By 1853 the demand for the establishment of University had gathered momentum and it found expression in the evidence given before the Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1853.

It appears from the evidence taken by the Select Committee in 1853 that the apprehension that Indians may become disloyal as a result of education was still in the minds of the Government. Even some of the people supposed to have experience of the state of education in India gave their opinion against the proposal to set up Universities. Even Sir Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control, who was interested in the spread of education in India, was not free from misgivings. He accepted the idea of setting up Universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras with hesitation. He was worried about finding employment for the graduates, as he knew that unemployed educated youths would be a menace to the Government. He frankly wrote to Lord Dalhousie, "if they choose to educate themselves, well and good, but I am against providing our own future detractors, opponents and grumblers".

Men like Alexander Duff, J. C. Marshman, C. H. Cameron, C. E. Trevelyan, Frederick Halliday and others strongly pleaded for the foundation of Universities in India and they succeeded in allaying the fear of the authorities regarding the possible consequences of the spread of education. It will be worthwhile to mention in some detail the evidence of Frederick Halliday, the first Lieutenant Governor

of Bengal. In reply to the Question—"Is there any ground for the supposition that the spread of education is dangerous to the British Government?"—he replied in the negative and asserted that, "on the whole popular knowledge is a safer thing to deal with than popular ignorance". Most remarkable and interesting was his statement on the desire of the people of Bengal for English education. He stated, "The condition of Bengal, with regard to English education, is peculiar; the desire for it is becoming a craving, the people look for it most anxiously, even those of a very low class. In obscure villages, to which you could scarcely have supposed the name of English education would have reached, you find persons joining together, and making attempts to establish schools and obtain teachers, to the best of their means, and anxiously looking for assistance; at the same time doing a great deal for themselves according to the means at their disposal. In many respects a very extraordinary degree of energy prevails in favour of English education among those who have received it; it appears as if a reasonable inoculation of English education among them begets a strong desire to inoculate others, and to spread it to the utmost of their power. It is a very creditable point in their character." This undoubtedly was a fine tribute to the people of Bengal and their love for Western education and coming as it does from a man of Halliday's position and experience, it gives an insight into the deep roots that Western education had taken in Bengal by the middle of the nineteenth century.

The efforts of Duff, Cameron, Halliday and others ultimately succeeded in removing the misgivings of the British authorities and convincing them of the necessity of establishing Universities and undertaking a plan for the improvement of education in India.

The new policy was embodied in the Despatch of 19 July, 1854, prepared by Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India. Some believe it to have been drafted by John Stuart Mill and others think it to be the work of Lord Northbrook. The Despatch reviewed the state of education

in India and recommended a plan for its improvement. The object of the Despatch was stated to be "supply of existing deficiencies, and the adoption of such improvements as may be best calculated to secure the ultimate benefit of the people". In the same philanthropic vein it continued, "Among many subjects of importance, none can have a stronger claim to our attention than that of education. It is one of our most sacred duties to be the means, as far as in us lies, of conferring upon the natives of India those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of knowledge, and which India may, under Providence, derive from her connection with England". While not denying the philanthropic object of the Despatch it must be added that it had other objectives too. One such was providing a larger number of suitable Indians for Government posts, and another was the hope that it would help commercial expansion. The latter objective appears to be rather surprising in view of the nature and contents of the Despatch but Paragraph 4 of the Despatch states that it would "secure to us a larger and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufactures and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour."

In the Despatch recommendation was made for the creation of a properly co-ordinated system of education from the lowest to the highest stage. There was to be a large number of teaching institutions, primary schools, higher schools and colleges. Meritorious students were to be helped to continue higher studies by awarding scholarships systematically. Deserving private educational institutions were to receive Government grants. In each province a special department of education was to be set up and a well-organized system of inspection was to be arranged by appointing inspectors. Emphasis was laid on the need of mass education, women's education, improvement and patronage of vernaculars and the training of teachers. Schools were to be established in every district. In the schools the vernacular should be the medium of instruction. A University was to be established in each Presidency town on the model

of the University of London. The Universities could have Professorships in Law, Vernaculars, Civil Engineering and Classical languages. A remarkable feature of the Despatch was its declaration that education should be exclusively secular. "Any subjects connected with religious belief" were to be excluded from degree examinations, and institutions irrespective of religious denominations were to be affiliated to the Universities.

Taken as a whole, the Despatch was "one of the wisest state papers framed by the Court of Directors" and it was very well received in India. Lord Dalhousie and other Government officers concerned with education found some portions of the Despatch contradictory and ambiguous. Dalhousie was rather hesitant and the Government did not proceed with the University Act but waited for further instructions and clarifications from the Court of Directors. A University Committee was appointed for working out details of a scheme in accordance with the recommendation of the Despatch. The University Committee submitted its report in 1856. The Governor-General-in-Council approved the draft of a Bill for the University of Calcutta with necessary modifications for the Universities of Madras and Bombay. The University Act was passed in 1857. Governor-General Lord Canning became the first Chancellor of the University of Calcutta and Sir James William Colville its first Vice-Chancellor. Among the first Fellows of the Calcutta University were Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ramprosad Roy, Moulavi Muhammad Wajeeh, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, and Ramgopal Ghose.

Alexander Duff's efforts no doubt contributed much to the foundation of Universities in India. But he wanted that higher English education in India should be "in close and inseparable alliance with the illuminating, quickening, beautifying influence of the Christian Faith". Thus the plan for imparting secular education disappointed the missionaries. Duff considered that "high English Education, without religion was a blind suicidal policy". The missionaries were hoping for an ultimate conversion of all Indians to their faith, and English education was regarded as one of

the most effective instruments for that purpose. Naturally the new developments following the Despatch of 1854 caused bitter disappointment and dejection among them. Scathing criticisms of the new policy were made and one of them went so far as to say that the "Government were nourishing vipers in their bosom, and if they should one day be stung by them, they must not be surprised".

One of the most thoughtful criticisms of the new system of education was made by an eminent Indian—Kisorichand Mitra. He denied the charge that it was "calculated to produce only secularists". He pointed out the great moral and religious benefits of the new education and welcomed it as beneficial. But he also pointed out its defects, which were due to "its heterogeneous constitution and its defective system of training". The whole system, according to him, "was based on cramming turning out intellectual machines and not intellectual men". There were too many subjects to be studied which most of the students were unable to master.

Though the Despatch of 1854 stressed the need of vernacular education yet it did not receive the desired attention. A section of enlightened Indians had become aware of this vital necessity. The Bengal Vernacular Society had been founded in 1851 with the object of "giving every opportunity for the attainment of a complete education both in English and the vernacular ; so as to make the former the medium for acquiring and the latter of diffusing ideas". But instruction in the vernacular languages and instruction in English were regarded by the Government and most of the people as incompatible. In reply to this question Halliday had given a categorical and remarkable answer in 1853 before the Select Committee. He said, "I think both are of enormous importance ; there are parties in India who tell you the one thing needful is English instruction, and other parties who tell you the one thing needful is vernacular instruction. I differ with them both. I think the two ought to go on ; they relate to different classes of the people altogether, and they ought to go on together. You ought as far as possible, to give a good



vernacular education to the masses, at the same time that you give opportunities to the classes who have leisure to do so, to acquire a knowledge of English literature and science". Unfortunately, this view failed to be appreciated and it took quite a long time before vernacular education earned its right place in the system of education in the country.

Nevertheless, the foundation of the Universities marked the culmination of the growth of Western education in India. The conservatives' apprehension that English education would work as a disintegrating force was found to be baseless. On the contrary Western education affected almost every aspect of Indian life and brought about changes of far reaching importance and consequences. But the expectations of Macaulay and his adherents or the missionaries did not materialise. All educated Indians did not become "English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" nor could they be brought "under the shadow of the same religious faith". Western education largely fulfilled the expectations of the Indian reformers who kept their faith in it and its good effects. Indeed the signal importance of English education in the history of the Indian awakening can never be doubted.

## CHAPTER V

### RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

#### THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES : BRAHMO SAMAJ : HINDU AWAKENING.

The decay and degeneration that had set in in the whole of India in the eighteenth century was shockingly evident in religious life, particularly in Bengal. Hindu religion, as it was practised at that time, was shorn of all its moral and spiritual values, sublimity and sanctity. Superstition and prejudices had taken the upper hand and "men were clinging to dead forms and trying to draw spiritual sustenance therefrom, as children cling to the corpses of their dead mothers." The priestly class in general were exploiting the ignorance and superstition of the people to their own material advantage and it seemed that the high principles on which Hinduism was based were going to be lost sight of for ever and the Sanskrit classics and the Sastras were to remain buried in oblivion. Bengal thus presented a very fertile field for the Christian missionaries to sow the seeds of their faith, which they had been doing with great success in other parts of the Orient.

Though the Christian missionaries had come to Bengal much earlier, the first organized and effective missionary activities, began with the foundation of the Serampore Baptist Mission in 1800. John Thomas, a Baptist missionary, had come to Bengal as the doctor of a vessel in 1783 and sought to spread Christianity in Malda where he settled. There he learnt Bengali from Ramram Bose. Thomas left for England and again came back to Calcutta in 1793 bringing with him the famous missionary William Carey. Ramram Bose was appointed as the *Munshi* of Carey. The Baptist missionary group was further strengthened by the arrival of Marshman, Ward, Grant and others in 1799. Owing to the hostile attitude of the East India Company's officials, the missionaries shifted their headquarters to the Danish possession Seram-

pore, a few miles from Calcutta. The missionaries began to spread the message of Christ, translated the Bible into native languages and distributed thousands of free copies among the people, and started educational institutions. Ramram Bose assisted Carey in translating the Bible into Bengali and compiled a religious tract in verse called the *Gospel Messenger* (1800) for indoctrinating the native people. In the same year he wrote another pamphlet named *Jnanadaya* in which he vehemently attacked Hinduism. It was very widely circulated, and "produced no little sensation in the native community". Naturally the book was highly appreciated by the missionaries for it exposed the 'folly and danger' of Hinduism. Ramram Bose was appointed a Pandit of the Fort William College in 1801 and though never actually converted, he rendered useful service to the Serampore Mission. Acknowledging the contribution of Ramram Bose for the propagation of Christianity in Bengal, J. C. Marshman wrote, "But like those who assisted in the construction of the ark, and yet obtained no asylum in it, Ram-basoo, though he contributed largely to the introduction of Christian truth into the country, never himself sought refuge in the doctrines of the Gospel".

The missionary efforts, however, met with very little success and Ward regretted in 1808 that "conversions among the Heathen are very rare." By 1810 only 300 people were converted and the missionaries faced opposition not only from the Hindus but also from the Moslems and from the East India Company, who were against any interference in the social or religious affairs of the Indians.

From 1813, with the renewal of the Company's Charter, the Government opposition to Missions ended and missionary activity intensified. Carey, however, never wanted or liked any Government patronage or interference and he said, 'Let not Government touch my work; it can only succeed in making them hypocrites: I wish to make them Christians.' Till his death in 1831, Carey earnestly and zealously worked for the success of his mission and mainly at his instance and initiative the Serampore Mission published a number of Bengali books. They also started two journals in Bengali—

the *Digdarshan* and the *Samachar Darpan*, both starting in 1818. A number of schools and a college were also founded by the missionaries. The missionaries succeeded in converting only a few hundred natives but in matters of social reform, education, Bengali literature and vernacular journalism their contribution was quite significant. Besides these, the missionary activities and their vehement criticism of Hindu religion, rites and customs had another great effect. It roused the people from their slumber and lethargy and stirred them to action. It was felt that unless some definite steps were taken to put things in order, before long the whole country will succumb to the mighty onslaught and India would drift away from her own age-old religion, civilization and heritage. The man who first sensed the danger was Raja Rammohun Roy whose religious views and activities we have already discussed. It should, however, be borne in mind that Rammohun was not hostile to the missionaries though he was drawn into a controversy with them. It was he who requested the Scottish Mission to send out competent teachers to Bengal. When Alexander Duff, the famous Scottish missionary, arrived in Calcutta in 1830, Rammohun welcomed him and helped Duff to organize the General Assemblies Institution that he founded.

From 1831 the Scottish Mission headed by Alexander Duff became very active and continued missionary activities vigorously. Duff launched a crusade against Hinduism with almost a fanatic zeal and sailed with the storm caused by the Young Bengal movement behind him. But before we discuss the movements of the thirties it is necessary to consider the origin of the most important religious movement of the nineteenth century—the Brahmo movement.

### **The Brahmo Movement :**

The foundation of the *Brahma Sabha*, on 20 August, 1828 was the culmination of the religious thought and activities of Rammohun Roy. It also marked the beginning of the Brahmo movement. There are two different accounts of the origin of the *Brahma Sabha*. According to one after the failure of the Unitarian Mission, Adam himself suggested the

foundation of a new body. The other story is that one day while Rammohun was returning home in his carriage from Unitarian service along with Tarachand Chakravarty and Chandrasekhar Deb, these two young associates of Rammohun suggested that they should have a place of worship suited to their views and principles instead of attending a Unitarian service. Rammohun accepted the suggestion and after consulting his friends and associates decided to set up a place for the worship of the One True God. A house was rented for the purpose, which became famous as Feringhee Kamal Bose's house, and the *Brahma Sabha* was opened with Tarachand Chakravarty as its Secretary. The meetings of the *Sabha* were held every Saturday evening, in which the Vedas were recited by Brahmins, and Upanishadic texts were read and later explained in Bengali by Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagish. This was followed by a sermon and singing of hymns.

The *Brahma Sabha* began to attract a larger number of people and in the course of only two years Rammohun succeeded in raising enough funds to purchase a house on the Chitpore Road for establishing a regular church. It was publicly inaugurated on 23 January, 1830 as the Church of the Brahmo Samaj and the property was left in the hands of a Board of Trustees. The Trust Deed of the Samaj executed by Rammohun is a remarkable document as it defines the principles of the Brahmo movement as envisaged by its founder. The terms of the Trust were that the Trustees should at all times allow the building to be used :

- "As and for a place of Public Meeting, of all sorts of descriptions of people, without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner :
- "For the worship and adoration, of the Eternal, Unsearchable, and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation, or title peculiarly used for, and applied to, any particular Being, or Beings, by any man, or set of men, whatsoever ;
- "And that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within . . . ; and that no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing, shall ever be permitted therein ; and that

- no animal or living creature shall . . . be deprived of life, either for religious purposes or for food ;
- " And that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary, by any accident, for the preservation of life), feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon ;
- " And that, in conducting the said worship or adoration, no object, animate or inanimate, that has been, or is or shall hereafter become, or be recognized, as an object of worship, by any man or set of men shall be reviled, or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying, or in the hymns, or other mode of worship that may be or used in the said message or building ;
- " And that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the Promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue, and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

The foundation of the Brahmo Samaj, the abolition of *Sati* and the excesses of the Young Bengal alarmed the orthodox community to a great extent and the *Dharma Sabha* sought to vindicate orthodox Hinduism and its rites and customs with all its might. The Brahmo Samaj, however, succeeded in drawing only a limited number of men whose faith in Hinduism had already been shaken for one reason or other. It roused the curiosity of the people, agitated them, and caused a stir, but very few could actually be drawn into the movement. Moreover, the Brahmo movement was till now only a reforming movement ; Rammohun proceeded strictly on the injunction of the Sastras and the Vedas were regarded as infallible. Most of the people who came to the Samaj were influential and educated men. They came either because they had sympathy and respect for monotheism or because of the personal influence of Rammohun. In private life most of the members of the Brahmo Samaj adhered to the traditionally prevalent practices and even Dwarakanath Tagore, one of the closest friends of Rammohun, celebrated *Durga Puja* in his ancestral house with all pomp and grandeur. Attempts at social reforms and an enthusiasm to change private life which became part and parcel of the Brahmo movement in later stage were singularly absent. As remarked by Sibnath Sastri, one of the founders of the

*Sadharan Brahmo Samaj*, Rammohun was the pioneer "working single-handed to clear away a mass of popular prejudice and prepare the way for those who were coming after him. His work was mainly negative and reformatory and not positive and constructive."

A movement that appeals to and depends on a limited circle of educated and influential persons and on the ability and enterprise of one individual lacks the inherent strength of becoming a growing and dynamic force. So it was only natural that after the death of Rammohun in 1833, the Brahmo Samaj faced a very critical period of depression and stagnation. The management of the Samaj was in the hands of Dwarakanath Tagore and Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagish. Dwarakanath was a very busy man and was pre-occupied with other work, and so found little time to spare for the Samaj, though he was always ready to help in any way he could. So it was left to Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagish to shoulder the heavy responsibility of continuing the Samaj and the Brahmo movement. This he did with amazing courage, perseverance and devotion, to the best of his abilities. He never failed to continue the Brahmo service on the stipulated date and even the most inclement weather or the greatest of odds could not prevent him from being at his place in the church. He shouldered the heavy responsibility up to 1843, when Devendranath Tagore, the son of Dwarakanath Tagore, formally joined the Brahmo Samaj and took over the charge from him. Ramachandra Vidyavagish was as if waiting for this handover and he died in 1844, leaving a legacy of Rs. 500/- for the Samaj—the last token of his love and devotion to a cause for he had devoted his life.

Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905) had his early education in the Anglo-Hindu School founded by Rammohun and he joined the Hindu College in 1831 and continued his studies there for about four years. Devendranath was only a boy when he met Raja Rammohun but the latter was greatly impressed by the young Devendranath who in his turn had great veneration for the Raja. It is said that before

Rammohun left for England he met Devendranath and told him, "I leave you as a successor to my *guddi* (post)". Even as a young boy Devendranath had a deep love for Bengali language, life and culture. He learnt Sanskrit, Bengali and Music. When he was only 15 he became the Secretary of *Sarvatattvadipika Sabha* (1832) an association for the cultivation of knowledge. He also became a member of the *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge* in 1838, but radical thought and philosophy apparently was unsuitable to his bent of mind. In 1838 Devendranath was converted to the Brahmo faith. Devendranath writes in his autobiography that after the death of his beloved grandmother he suffered from spiritual loneliness and often observed the stars and wondered at the great mystery of creation and the Creator. One day he came across a leaf from the Upanishads with a hymn on monotheism and this finally converted him to monotheistic doctrines.

Devendranath wanted to form a society for investigating religious truths and discussing similar subjects. With this in mind he founded in 1839 the *Tattvaranjini Sabha* in his ancestral home at Jorasanko (in Calcutta). It later became known as the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*, and ushered in a new period not only in the Brahmo movement but in the Bengal Renaissance. Promotion of religious enquiry and dissemination of the knowledge of the Upanishads were the main objects of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*. It used to organize weekly and monthly meetings in which papers were read on various subjects and divine service was held once a month. The *Sabha* developed rapidly and in course of only two years its membership rose from 10 to over 500. Since its inception, its relation with the Brahmo Samaj was very close and it soon became the main organizational body of the Brahmo Samaj. Devendranath was the life and soul of the *Sabha* and his relationship with the Samaj consequently became very close. From 1841 the Brahmo Samaj took charge of the monthly service of the *Sabha* and the latter looked after the financial affairs of the Samaj. The *Tattvabodhini Sabha* was not the organization of any limited circle of men but it practically comprised all the leading people of Bengal except-



ing of course the members and adherents of the *Dharma Sabha*. Among its members were Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Rajendralal Mitra, Iswarchandra Gupta, Tarachand Chakravarty, Pearychand Mitra, Madanmohan Tarkalankar and others. It became the meeting place of people of different shades of opinion and of different walks of life. No other organization in the first half of the nineteenth century could exercise so much extensive influence on society as did the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*. It revived the shaken spirit of the English educated Bengalis and from a blind imitation and adoration of the Western culture and civilization it succeeded in drawing the attention of the people to the great values of Indian culture and its heritage. It welcomed the new light of Western civilization, sought to win over superstition and prejudices and decaying tradition, but at the same time remained firmly anchored to its national moorings. It was without the orthodoxy of the *Dharma Sabha* and the Western bias of the *Academic Association* and stood for all round progress.

In 1840 the *Tattvabodhini Sabha* founded the Tattvabodhini School for educating young men in the principles of the new faith. Akshoykumar Datta a great scholar, a writer and a man of gifted intellect, was appointed a teacher of the school. Devendranath had succeeded in infusing a new life into the Brahmo movement and now he was determined to rejuvenate and reform the Brahmo Samaj. With this object in mind he drafted a new covenant for the Samaj which was designed to keep the Samaj as close as possible to the doctrines laid down by Rammohun. A regular form of Church service was also sought to be introduced.

On the 7th of *Poush*, 1765 *Saka* (1843), Devendranath and twenty of his associates formally joined the Brahmo Samaj and it marked a turning point in the history of the Brahmo movement. Devendranath not only continued the religious mission of Rammohun with renewed zeal and vigour but also boldly stood against the ultra-radical trend and the avalanche of missionary attacks on Indian religion and culture launched by Alexander Duff.

In 1843 he started the famous journal *Tattvabodhini Patrika* which became the chief organ of the Brahmo Samaj. Akshoykumar Datta was appointed the editor of the journal. The *Patrika* occupies an honoured position in our cultural awakening. It led people to serious thinking and earnest speaking. It emphasised the need of developing the mother tongue, the need of studying science and theology and of an uncompromising battle against superstitions and prejudices, the necessity of a moral and material upliftment. The journal succeeded in creating an interest in antiquarian research and drew the mind of the people to the Sastras and the Sanskrit classics. All the leading writers contributed to the journal and consequently it set an unprecedentedly high standard of journalism. -

The Brahmo movement had hitherto remained mainly confined to Calcutta. Devendranath now sought to propagate the movement in the districts, for which he engaged a number of preachers. As a result of these efforts branches of the Brahmo Samaj were founded in some provincial towns, namely, Suksagar, Bansberia, Midnapore, Dacca, Comilla etc. But the Brahmo movement found it very difficult to make much headway among the people in general whose faith in orthodox Hinduism was too deep-rooted to be easily shaken.

The year 1845 is memorable in the history of religious movement in the country. As has already been mentioned above, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland missionaries led by Alexander Duff continued the missionary activities since the death of Carey in 1831. Duff found the situation in the thirties congenial to his mission. Orthodox Hinduism was in a decaying condition and was battered by criticism. The Brahmo Samaj was passing through a period of stagnation and the young radicals, having lost their faith in ancestral religion, were expected to be easy prey to Christianity. Duff continued a relentless attack on Hindu religion, culture and civilization and it was Devendranath who organized a formidable opposition against the missionaries in defence of Indian religion and culture. The struggle had started a few years earlier, but it came to a head with the publication of Duff's book *India and India Missions*. In this book Duff

bitterly attacked Indian religion and culture and the Vedanta philosophy, and his language and remarks at times exceeded all sense of proportion and decency. He wrote, "Of all the systems of false religion ever fabricated by the perverse ingenuity of fallen man, Hinduism is surely the most stupendous—whether we consider the boundless extent of its range, or the boundless multiplicity of its component parts. Of all systems of false religion it is that which seems to embody the largest amount and variety of semblances and counterfeits of divinely revealed facts and doctrines." The *Tattvabodhini Sabha* and the *Patrika* took up the challenge and the latter published a scathing criticism of the book. A booklet entitled *Vaidantic Doctrines Vindicated* was published by the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. The author's name was not mentioned but it was generally regarded as written by Rajnarayan Bose. The struggle reached its climax when it became known that one Umeshchandra Sarkar, a student of Duff's school, along with his wife had been converted to Christianity. Devendranath received a rude shock and he at once set on foot an opposition against the missionaries. A door to door campaign was started, a large amount of money was collected, and a school called the Hindu Hitarthi Vidyalaya (Hindu Charitable Institution) was started. Orthodox Hindus also rallied round Devendranath and the anti-conversion campaign spread in different parts of the province. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* published articles protesting against missionary activities and urged the people to stand in defence of traditional religion and culture.

Duff also did not remain silent. He criticised the Brahmos for their belief in the infallibility of the Vedas. The ultra-radicals also disapproved the anti-conversion campaign and criticised Brahmoism as a 'half-way house' and the Brahmos as 'hypocrites', saying that the followers of Vedanta temporised and were hesitant about the Vedic revelations. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* strongly defended the Samaj's basis on Vedic infallibility and proclaimed, "We will not deny that we consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone, as the authorised rule of Hindu theology. They are the sole foundation of all our beliefs and truths of all other Shastras

must be judged of according to their agreement with them. What we consider as revelation is contained in the Vedas alone ; and the last part of our holy Scriptures treating of the final dispensation of Hinduism forms what is called "Vedanta". The efforts of Devendranath and others were apparently successful ; the missionaries did not have many more converts in subsequent years and when Duff finally left India in 1863, he must have been a disappointed man.

With all his missionary bias and lack of sympathy and understanding for Indian religion and culture Duff's contribution to the Bengal Renaissance must not be lost sight of. As an educationist he will always be remembered. The part that he played in the foundation of Universities in India, the College that he founded in Calcutta, the knowledge in scientific, historical, literary and other subjects that he imparted to his students, and the keen interest that he took in social reforms earned for him an esteemed place in the pages of history. Besides the College founded by Duff, St. Xavier's College (1835), La Martinière (1836), Doveton College (1836), Loreto House (1841) and many other missionary educational institutions rendered invaluable service to the cause of education in Bengal and other parts of India. Moreover, the beneficent influence of Christian ideals and Western 'values' on different eminent Indians and on various movements must always be acknowledged with gratitude.

The controversy on the question of Vedic infallibility soon led to a theological revolt within the Brahmo Samaj. Though the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* defended the official Brahmo stand on Vedic infallibility, a number of Brahmos were becoming rather critical of this doctrine. Among them was Akshoykumar Datta himself, the editor of the paper. A firm believer in Rationalism and Reasoning, he found it difficult to accept the doctrine. He was unhappy over the whole question and began to discuss the matter privately with Devendranath. This intellectual revolt began to find expression in the *Patrika* in the form of correspondence. The Board of Editors of the paper in general also shared the doubts of Akshoykumar. About this time in 1846, Devendra-

nath's father died and he found himself faced with a huge debt and ruinous financial conditions. Besides this, he was practically excommunicated for his refusal to perform the *Sraddha* (memorial) ceremony of his father according to prevailing Hindu rites. These reverses of Devendranath also adversely affected the Brahmo Samaj. But he stood these trials of life with great fortitude and calmness and retrieved his fortune. But soon he faced an even greater problem. He had sent four Brahmins to Benaras to study the Vedas. These Pandits returned in 1847 and expressed the view that the doctrine of Vedic infallibility is not always tenable. Devendranath personally went to Benaras to study the sacred scripture and after a prolonged and intense study himself started to doubt the infallibility of the Vedas. Now was the time for a public renunciation of the doctrine on which the whole movement was based. The younger section of the Samaj pressed for its renunciation. But Devendranath was still hesitant and his dilemma can easily be understood. He was keen to keep the movement as close as possible to the old doctrinal basis. So he selected passages from the Upanishads on monotheism and published them in the form of a book entitled *Brahma Dharma* (Religion of the worshippers of One True God). He also laid down some fundamental principles of Natural Theism called *Brahmo Dharma Bija* or 'Seed Principles of Brahmoism'. A new covenant was also framed. Thus a great change and reconstruction took place in the Brahmo movement between 1847 and 1850, and the man mainly responsible for this new development was Akshoykumar Datta. From now on a passage from the Upanishads began to be published at the head of the *Patrika*, indicating the great change that had taken place in the movement. It said :

"The Rik Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda and Siksha, Kalpa, Vyakaran, Nirukta, Chhandas and Jyotish, are inferior ; that is truly superior which enables a man to attain to the Eternal and Immutable Being."

From 1850, mainly owing to the efforts of Rajnarayan Bose, the Brahmo ideal which till now was severely intellec-

tual and theological began to develop a devotional fervour. The transition in the movement that had started since 1845, however, did not end with the renunciation of the Vedic infallibility. The revolt that had started on theological question now extended to the question of social reform. The *Tattvabodhini Patrika* was practically becoming the mouth-piece of the new spirit and articles began to be published advocating widow re-marriage, women's education, denouncing early-marriage, polygamy, intemperance etc. Devendranath found it difficult to accept the new ideas. Not that he was against social reform, but he was conservative by temperament and believed rather in a policy of caution and gradual social changes than in attempting a social revolution. But as a wise man he moved judiciously and did not interfere in the policy of the *Patrika*. He confined himself mainly to the spiritual and devotional work of the movement. But the difference between him and the younger section began to increase. The activities of the revived *Atmiya Sabha* shocked Devendranath and it mainly caused his two years' retirement (1856-1858) to Simla hills, where he spent his time in deep meditation, prayer and study. Just on the eve of Devendranath's departure for Simla, Akshoykumar Datta had been taken seriously ill, which caused his virtual retirement from all public work for life. But the intellectual revolt started by Akshoykumar continued.

Devendranath returned in 1858, the very year Keshabchandra Sen (1838-1884) joined the Brahmo movement. Keshabchandra came of a well-known family, being the grand-son of Ramkamal Sen, one of the stalwarts of the orthodox community. Keshab's English education led him to read the Bible. He was deeply impressed by the idea of the unity of God. Even from his boyhood he started writing hymns and prayers in English. He started a night school for needy students in 1856. In 1857 he founded a small society called *The Good-Will Fraternity* for religious discussions and prayer. Here they used to read discourses from the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* and writings of Rammohun Roy. He came across a copy of Rajnarayan Bose's tract *What is Brahmoism* and found the Brahmo principles similar

to his own views. He joined the Samaj and soon became a close counsellor and associate of Devendranath and a tower of strength to the Brahmo Samaj. A new life was now infused into the movement, which became more dynamic than ever before. Brahmoism became a real power. The organizing capacity, oratory and zeal of young Keshabchandra drew innumerable young men into the movement and it ended the period of depression and stagnation that had set in the last few years. The Brahmo movement once more took a new turn.

In 1859 Devendranath dissolved the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*. The difference between that organization and Devendranath had started a few years earlier and now he thought the *Sabha* had outlived its purpose. In the same year was founded the Brahmo Vidyalaya (School) where lectures were given on Brahmo theology by Devendranath, Keshabchandra and other leaders of the Samaj. The school was a great success and created much enthusiasm among the younger people. A few months later Devendranath, accompanied by Keshabchandra, went to Ceylon and during this trip the relations between the two became even closer. The controversy with the missionaries, which had died down since the anti-conversion campaign of the forties, flared up again as a result of a number of lectures delivered by Keshabchandra at Krishnagar, one of the important cities of Bengal. Duff was still in Calcutta at the time, but the chief missionary critics were Rev. Dyson and Rev. Lalbihari Dey a reputed writer and critic. The superb oratory and forceful arguments of Keshabchandra won the day, and the controversy ended with his famous lecture *The Brahmo Samaj Vindicated* (1863). Soon after this Duff left for England.

From 1860 Keshabchandra started to lecture and write on Brahmoism with unusual fire and conviction and these made a profound impression on the young students in particular, to whom he became the idol and leader. That year saw the foundation of the *Sangat Sabha* for promoting spiritual discourses among the members. This organization was a source of inspiration to the younger Brahmos and has been regarded as "the seed-plot of neo-Brahmoism". The mem-

bers made an intense study of the Bible and the works of Theodore Parker, Professor Newman, Miss Cobbe etc. This developed in them a spirit of repentance and prayer and marked the beginning of a new trend in the Brahmo movement. In 1861 Keshabchandra gave up his post and totally devoted himself to the Brahmo movement. Another notable person to join the movement was Bijaykrishna Goswami. The Brahmo Samaj also began taking up humanitarian causes, and it organized famine relief for the affected people of the North-Western Provinces and also an Epidemic Fund for the sufferers from epidemic fever which broke out in Bengal. In 1861 was also undertaken the important work of remodelling the *Grihanustana* or domestic rites and ceremonies according to Brahmo doctrines. Till now the members of the Brahmo Samaj generally performed these rites and ceremonies at home according to orthodox Hindu practices. But this discrepancy and contradiction came in for sharp criticism from the young Brahmos, and Devendranath remodelled the sacraments, *Jalakarma* (post-natal ceremony), *Namakaran* (name-giving ceremony), *Upanayana* (investiture with the sacred thread), *Diksha* (initiation), *Vivaha* (marriage), *Antyeshti* (funeral rites) and *Shraddha* (post-funeral rites and ceremonies). In remodelling the sacraments he kept as close as possible to the orthodox Hindu practices. Devendranath's second daughter was given in marriage according to the Brahmo rites and this gave a great fillip to the reforming zeal of the younger men of the Samaj.

A fortnightly journal named the *Indian Mirror* was started in 1861 with Keshabchandra Sen as the editor, and it became the English organ of the Samaj. Devendranath Tagore and Manomohan Ghose gave all possible help in running the journal. Keshabchandra had now become the source of inspiration and unquestioned leader of the younger men in the movement, which had begun to spread far and wide and was taking up the cause of social reform, education and humanitarian service. In 1862 Devendranath greeted Keshabchandra as *Brahmananda* (One whose delight is in God) and appointed him the *Acharya* (Minister) of the



Samaj. This was heartily acclaimed by the younger men, but the older section of the Samaj were not too happy, as they found Keshab unspiritual and too-radical in his views.

A high school named the Calcutta College for the higher education of young men was founded (1862). Progressive young Brahmos became keenly interested in women's emancipation and women's education. Some of them started the *Bamabodhini Patrika* for women and Keshabchandra founded the *Society of Theistic Friends* with the object of discussing religious questions and working for women's education. A separate society for women named *Brahmica Samaj* was founded with Keshabchandra as its Minister. The younger men had also celebrated an inter-caste marriage and were pressing for this revolutionary social change which did not yet have the approval of Devendra-nath. He removed Keshabchandra from the Trusteeship of the Samaj and from its Secretaryship. The younger section, after being dismissed from the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, started the paper *Dharmatattva*, which became their organ. However, nothing untoward happened immediately, though the difference between the older and the younger section in the Samaj was widening gradually.

In 1864-65 Keshabchandra Sen went to Madras and Bombay on a missionary tour. This was a great success ; the Brahmo movement began to assume an all-India character and Keshabchandra became an all-India figure. Brahmo preachers also cut new grounds in Faridpur, Dacca, Mayman-singh and other places in East Bengal. Many new branches of the Samaj were founded and many people were converted to the faith, in spite of vigorous opposition, social persecution and excommunication.

The clouds that had been gathering for some time ultimately broke into a violent storm and caused an upheaval in the Brahmo Samaj. The immediate cause that precipitated the conflict within the Samaj was the younger Brahmos' objection to the wearing of the *Poita* or the sacred thread by those who conducted their divine service. Devendranath also disapproved of their demand for promoting inter-caste marriage, and allowing women to join the congregation, and

of their open attacks on the older section of the Brahmos. The publication of a letter in the *Indian Mirror* attacking the non-conforming Brahmos caused a breach between the older and younger members of the Samaj, and a dispute arose regarding the proprietorship of the paper. Devendranath, however, was much above any such squabble and he quietly allowed Keshabchandra to take possession of the paper. But, in spite of Devendranath's sincere desire and his efforts to avoid any schism in the Brahmo Samaj, the differences could not be solved. The younger men led by Keshabchandra wrote a letter to Devendranath demanding reforms in the Samaj and stressed that their demands were not due to discord or dispute or enmity of any kind but that they were engaged in "a pure disinterested contest for the advancement of religion, a dispute between the exalted ideal of religion in the hearts of the Young Brahmos, and the state of the old Samaj". The reforms demanded in the letter were that no minister or preacher or reciter of the Samaj should retain any mark of caste or sectarian distinction whatever; only honest, pious and learned Brahmos should be allowed to occupy seats on the altar; the hymns, expositions and sermons should be inspired by the liberal sentiments of Brahmoism and no aspersion should be made against any sect or religion. In conclusion they threatened to establish a separate Samaj if their demands were not favourably considered. Devendranath gave a very firm but polite reply to the letter in which he refused to accept the first demand as harmful to the Samaj and unfair to the older members. The second and third demands, Devendranath said, were superfluous, as they had always been observed in the Samaj. This letter quietened the young Brahmos for the time being and they began to co-operate with the Samaj. In the meantime Keshabchandra undertook his all-India tour which has already been referred to. But the conflict was not one of personalities but one of principle—theological and social. The conservative attitude of Devendranath, apprehensive of widening the difference between the Brahmo Samaj and the Hindu community, could not go along with Keshabchandra's zeal for radical

reform. The former hoped for gradual social changes through the elevation of the minds of the people, but the latter longed for a social revolution. So in spite of the closest attachment of the two and mutual affection and regard the final schism was becoming inevitable. The last straw that broke the camel's back was Keshabchandra Sen's lecture on *Jesus Christ, Asia and Europe* (1866) in which he showed deep regard for Jesus, and said, "Blessed Jesus, immortal child of God! For the world he lived and died. May the world appreciate him and follow his precepts!" The lecture gave rise to the belief that Keshabchandra was going to embrace Christianity and provoked bitter criticism from the older section of the Samaj. Keshabchandra in order to remove the misgivings delivered another lecture on *Great Men*. This not only disappointed the Christian missionaries and dashed their hopes, but also caused further displeasure to the conservative Brahmos. The breach was now complete and in 1866 Keshabchandra Sen and his followers finally broke away from the Brahmo Samaj and founded the *Brahmo Samaj of India*. Henceforward, the original Brahmo Samaj became known as the *Adi Brahmo Samaj*.

The basic differences between the two groups were, firstly, the Adi Brahmo Samaj cry was "Brahmoism is Hinduism" but the younger Brahmos' cry was "Brahmoism is catholic and universal". Secondly, the former did not consider renunciation of caste as essential, whereas the latter considered it as essential as the renunciation of idolatry. To Devendranath the Brahmo movement was within the pale of Hinduism, was intended mainly for the Hindus, and represented the highest form of Hinduism. He regarded it as a religious mission as distinct from social mission. The Adi Brahmo Samaj soon passed into oblivion but it had rendered two great services. It had effectively checked the missionary proselytism; and had put an end to the craze for blind imitation of the West and focussed the mind of the educated people to India's own religious heritage.

Devendranath, *Maharsi* (the Great Sage) as he was called, was a saint in every sense of the term. He was con-

nected with a number of educational institutions in different parts of the province and was keenly interested in mass education. He was the first Secretary of the British Indian Association, one of the earliest of Indian political associations. In 1863 he purchased land in Santiniketan with the object of building up an *Asrama*. The Trust Deed of the *Asrama* was made in 1886 and the Maharsi's dream was fulfilled by his son Rabindranath Tagore who established Visvabharati, which became the meeting place of people from all parts of the globe. The Maharsi had the greatest respect for Western knowledge, while having a deep veneration for Oriental wisdom. In a letter to Max Muller written in 1884 he said, "The dissemination of the knowledge of our ancient literature will help to cement the bonds of union between the two peoples who, brought up under a common roof, parted from each other and scattered over distant quarters of the globe, again to be brought together under the mysterious decree of Almighty Providence". He never complained against anybody, and had nothing but blessings for the new Samaj of the younger Brahmos. Referring to the schism he wrote, "we must work and labour each in his own sphere and according to his own light, regardless of consequences. The crowning and fruition of our work rests with God alone, and we may repose our trust in Him for success. Truth will triumph in the end. *Satyam eva jayati*." That was what he worked and lived for throughout his life.

The young Brahmos under the leadership of Keshabchandra Sen began to propagate the new faith with great vigour. The number of Brahmo Samajes increased rapidly and many Brahmo marriages were celebrated. Keshabchandra started 'daily prayer' with his followers in his own home. From 1867 the *Brahmotsava* festival (Rejoicing in the Lord) begun to be celebrated. This was an instance of the devotional enthusiasm of Keshabchandra and his followers. Pratapchandra Mazumdar, one of the mainstays of the new Samaj, in an article on the *Brahmotsava* festival published in the *Indian Mirror* (1868), wrote, "Those Brahmos who desire to know what it is to *see* and *feel* God (we speak

with the humble reverence of sinners) should come and attend one of the *Brahmotsavas*. The humility, the hope, the prayerfulness, reverence, love, faith and joy that flow in celestial currents at such times catch men's souls by a kind of holy contagion". The sense of Sin and a spirit of prayer overwhelmed the mind of Keshab and his associates and consequently dominated their religious ceremonies. Of the *Brahmotsava* festival Miss Collect wrote, "Now for the first time in connection with the *Brahma Samaj* was witnessed the rare spectacle of sinful men, bitterly conscious of their sins, praying and listening with living sincerity for their soul's salvation". The infusion of the *Bhakti* element in the movement became easily discernible. The new trend found three outward forms—*Prayer*, *Samkirtan*, *Brahmotsava*. This was a remarkable change from the original Brahmo movement—a shift from *jnana* (knowledge) to *bhakti* (intense devotion). In this Keshab was inspired by Sri Chaitanyas' Vaishnavism though the stress on prayer was apparently a Christian influence. In Brahmo congregations Sri Chaitanya's Vaishnavism was discussed. A feature of the new trend was the growth of *Nagar Samkirtan* (street singing by a band of singers). Thus previously only Jesus was the inspirer, but now both Jesus and Sri Chaitanya became inspiration of Keshabchandra Sen.

In 1868 the foundation stone of the *Brahmo Mandir* of the new Samaj was laid. It was preceded by a *Nagar Samkirtan* singing a well-known hymn—'Men and Women are all equals and only he who has devotion will get salvation'. The *Brahmo Mandir* was opened for service in 1869.

The element of *Bhakti* introduced into the movement soon led to a new development—the growth of Vaishnava 'modesty' in the form of making prostration to one another among the members of the Samaj. Another development was the exaltation of Keshabchandra as an incarnation of God and consequently the growth of Keshab-worship. This development alarmed many members of the Brahmo Samaj of India who saw in it the beginning of the worship of man. A few Brahmos left the Samaj because of this and

others became very uneasy. Keshabchandra's own responsibility for this development is a vexed and much debated subject. But it cannot be denied that he did little or nothing to check the new trend when it first showed signs of development. This growth of the 'Keshab-cult', to employ modern terminology, did much harm to the Brahmo movement though the phase shortly came to an end. Nevertheless the movement, owing to the activities of Brahmo preachers, was spreading far and wide. Keshabchandra selected Pratapchandra Mazumdar, Gourgovinda Roy, Amritalal Bose, Aghornath Gupta and others for the purpose. Their efforts were a great success even in other parts of India such as the Deccan and Assam. The enthusiasm and zeal of the Brahmos for the propagation of their faith and their courage and tenacity in the face of social persecution and at times even physical violence earned the respect and admiration of many.

In 1870 Keshabchandra went to England to gain a better knowledge of the Western civilization and progress and "to excite the interest of the English public in the political, social and religious welfare of the men and women of India". The tour was a great success. He was welcomed everywhere and he met among others Max Muller, Gladstone, John Stuart Mill and Queen Victoria. During his six months stay he gave a number of lectures, and his oratory, scholarship and intense religious devotion made a great impression on the English people.

After coming back from England he founded the Indian Reform Association. Its object was the social and moral reformation of India. The activities undertaken by the Association were—supply of cheap and good literature, charitable relief, the spread of education, the improvement of the position of women and temperance work. Impressed with the immense influence of the Press in England he sought to improve the standard of Bengali newspapers. With this in mind he started the *Sulabh Samachar*, a weekly pice paper which was first of its kind in India and became very popular. He was also keenly interested in mass education and eradi-

cating social evils, as we have seen elsewhere in discussing the social reform movements.

To demonstrate the ideal of Brahmo families Keshab-chandra founded the *Bharatasrama* (The Indian Hermitage) in 1871. All the residents lived in the *Asrama* as members of a joint family and Keshabchandra himself conducted the daily prayer in which he stressed that the movement and the *Asrama* were a special dispensation of Providence and should be accepted by all true lovers of God. He made his followers believe that whatever he said or did in connection with the movement was Divine Command. This was seriously objected to by some Brahmos who questioned Keshab's attitude. In the *Asrama* a school for elderly women was also run. In the same year an attempt was made to unify the two Brahmo Samajes. But it did not materialise.

The year 1872 is a landmark in the history of religious movement in Bengal in the nineteenth century. It saw the passing of the Native Marriage Act legalising unorthodox casteless marriages. The Act made monogamy obligatory for the marriages under it, fixed the minimum age for the bride at 14 and for the bridegroom at 18 and it could be applicable to any bride and bridegroom who made the declaration: "I am not a Hindu, not a Mussalman, not a Christian". The Bill was originally named Brahmo Marriage Bill but the Adi Brahmo Samaj vehemently protested against the name as they considered themselves as Hindus and objected to the declaration "I am not a Hindu". Thus the Act had to be renamed as Native Marriage Act or more popularly known as the Civil Marriage Act. The passing of the Act was a great personal triumph of Keshab-chandra who had fought so long for inter-caste marriages. The Act gave great impetus to the young Brahmos' longing for sweeping social reforms and at the same time it gave birth to a strong Hindu reaction and set on foot a movement for a Hindu revival.

The zeal for sweeping and radical programme of reform became so strong among some of the members of the Samaj

that Keshabchandra himself found it difficult to approve of and keep pace with them. Some of them wanted the right of sitting with their wives and daughters amongst the general congregation at prayer time, which Keshabchandra did not approve. There was also difference on the question of women's education and women's emancipation. Keshabchandra was against University education of women, or against giving them the usual higher education. He believed that they need not be taught subjects like Mathematics, Philosophy, Science etc. This attitude seemed conservative to the younger section. Among these fiery young men were Sibnath Sastri, Dwarakanath Ganguli, Anandamohan Bose, Durgamohan Das and others. A difference of opinion between Keshabchandra Sen and a member of the *Bharat-asrama* arose. The dispute could not be solved by discussion or negotiation; it took an ugly turn and the matter went to the Court. Naturally a heated controversy started and Keshabchandra came in for sharp criticism from many members of the Samaj. He was particularly criticised for his alleged undemocratic and high-handed management of its affairs. The rebel group started a monthly, *Samadarshi*, where the Brahmo Samaj of India and its leader Keshabchandra were publicly criticised. Since its inception the Brahmo Samaj of India had neither any constitution nor any governing body. In 1867 God was announced as the President of Samaj, Keshabchandra Sen as the Secretary and Pratapchandra Mazumdar as the Assistant Secretary. Thus the seed of another schism in the future was sown at the very beginning of the new Samaj. So long as Keshabchandra remained the undisputed leader of the Samaj and exercised his magic influence on its members there was no difficulty in its management. But by 1877 the picture had changed and a strong opposition to Keshabchandra's views and religious ideas had developed. In 1876 Keshabchandra and his followers started living in a garden named *Sadhan Kanan* (A Forest Abode for Religious Culture), where he preached *Vairagya* and himself led a strictly austere life. Here they spent hours in meditation in the same way as Hindu mendicants. He introduced a fourfold classification:



of his devotees into the *Yogi*, the *Bhakta*, the *Jnani* and the *Shebak*. The adulation of Keshabchandra by his devoted disciples and this trend of mystic sentiment in his religious outlook caused much concern among the other members of the Samaj. In the light of the growing difference other causes of discord were magnified. 1877 the *Samadarshi* stressed the need of a constitution of the Samaj and demanded the formation of a Brahmo Representative Council for the purpose of drafting a constitution. Keshabchandra did not oppose the move, but rather he encouraged it. But before the two groups could be reconciled the marriage of Keshabchandra's daughter with the Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar caused the final split within the Brahmo movement.

In 1877 rumour became current that Keshabchandra Sen's eldest daughter, who was not yet 14, has been betrothed to the Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar who was hardly 15. This caused a great commotion in the Brahmo Samaj as not only both the bride and the bridegroom were under age but, what was more important, the bridegroom belonged to an idolatrous Hindu family. The rumour was ultimately confirmed and, in spite of vigorous protests, agitations and representations made to Keshabchandra, the marriage took place in 1878; for all practical purposes it was a Hindu marriage with certain modifications only. This was an outright and gross violation of Brahmo principles by the leader of the movement himself and led to another schism in the Samaj. The radical Brahmos, led by Sibnath Sastri, Anandamohan Bose, Dwarakanath Ganguli and others, finally broke away from Keshab's Samaj and founded the *Sadharan Brahmo Samaj* in 1878. The main resolution laying the foundation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was as follows :

"This meeting deeply deplores the want of a constitutional organization in the Brahmo Samaj and does humbly establish a Samaj, to be called the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, with a view to remove the serious and manifold evils resulting from the state of things and to secure the representation of the views and harmonious co-operation of the general Brahmo community, in all that affects the progress of the Theistic Church in India."

The Cooch-Bihar marriage was a fatal blow to the Brahmo movement, for it not only removed Keshabchandra

from the high pedestal that he occupied in the Samaj but also greatly undermined his towering prestige in the estimation of the people at large. Keshabchandra attempted to give an explanation, but it was a very lame one which failed to convince anyone but his devoted followers. Subsequently, it has been sought to be explained as paternal weakness for his daughter or even as a deliberate effort to break the movement on the part of the Government, which was apprehensive of the "mass-wise" trend of the Brahmo Samaj. The first explanation is understandable, but the latter one hardly carries any conviction. The theory that the Government which negotiated the marriage had promised Keshabchandra that there would be no idolatrous rituals in the wedding ceremony but did not keep its promise and thus took advantage of Keshab's "infinite trust in the honesty and goodness of the British" is indeed difficult to accept, and needs definite evidence before it merits any serious consideration. Whatever might have been working in Keshabchandra's mind at that time, it must be admitted that he had descended from the great moral and religious height which he had reached.

The Brahmo Samaj of India after 1878 continued its philanthropic and educational activities, though social reform activities practically ended. The *Yoga* and *Bhakti* element became stronger in Keshabchandra and in 1880 he declared his *Navavidhan* or the New Dispensation. This 'Harmony of Religions', as it was called, was an attempt at a synthesis of all religions. In the words of Keshabchandra "It recognises in all the prophets and saints a harmony, in all the scriptures a unity, and through all dispensations a continuity". The great value of pilgrimage to the prophets and saints was stressed and many new rituals were introduced. Its symbolic device was the Cross, the Crescent, the Trident and the Vedic Omkar. As observed by Max Muller, Keshabchandra held that "Jesus and Moses, Chaitanya and Buddha, Mohammed and Nanak should all become one before God. His New Dispensation was to embrace and unify all religions, all scriptures, and all prophets in God, and India was to be the birth-place of that all-embracing

religion". This was, one may say, the culmination of Keshabchandra's religious thinking, the end of his search for the Eternal Truth. But one may still find in him a dominating influence of Christianity and Jesus remained his main inspiration. In one of the later numbers of his new organ *New Dispensation* Keshabchandra wrote :

"Who rules India ? What power is that which sways the destinies of India at the present moment ? . . . You cannot deny that your hearts have been touched, conquered, and subjugated by a superior power. That power, need I tell you, is Christ. It is Christ who rules British India, and not the British Government. . . None but Jesus ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it".

It is not perhaps without reason that some have found in the religious thinking of Keshabchandra Sen an ever-changing mind groping to find out an elusive Truth. But the great spiritual and moral values of his character, his intense longing for communion with God, his fervent desire to benefit his countrymen, his efforts to make the Brahmo movement unsectarian and universal and his sincerity and enthusiasm have rightly earned for him an honoured place in the history of India. He continued the great work of social reform initiated by Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. His contribution to the Brahmo movement was immense. Sibnath Sastri, one of the founders of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, writes, "But for him Brahmoism, during those periods, could not have risen to be that power which it became in the land." It was Keshabchandra who succeeded in making the movement a dynamic force throughout the country and winning over thousands of young men to the Brahmo faith. One may rightly say that with the eclipse of Keshabchandra an eclipse set in in the movement itself. His love for his country was indeed very deep and the welfare of his countrymen was closest to his heart. But he had no connection with the growing political consciousness in the country. This was the result of his cardinal belief of his life—absolute faith in Providence. It has been said that he

succeeded in making a synthesis of Rationalism and Devotion. But one may rightly say that this is where he actually failed. In the later years of his life he began to ascribe everything to the Divine Order of Providence. That is why we find him advising his countrymen, "You are bound to be loyal to your divinely appointed sovereign. . . . Not to be loyal argues base ingratitude and absence of faith in Providence." He even considered his own words and actions as Divine Commands. This was in direct opposition to the spirit of the age, and was mainly why the career of one of the brightest jewels of the Indian awakening ended in a rather dim light.

The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj laid emphasis on its constitution. This was drafted by Anandamohan Bose, and was based on democratic principles, giving equal rights to all members in the management of the Samaj. By this time political movements in India had started on a strong footing and members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj such as Sibnath Sastri, Anandamohan Bose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Dwarkanath Ganguli and their associate Surendranath Banerjee, and many others were on the forefront of these, and contributed immensely to the growth of nationalism in India. Social reform activities were also continued, with emphasis on women's education and women's emancipation. Philanthropic works or humanitarian services such as organizing famine relief, orphanages, a deaf and dumb school, and other charitable institutions were salient features of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. A number of educational institutions such as the Brahmo Girls' School, the City College, the Boys' Boarding School were founded under the auspices of the Samaj. The journal and papers of the Samaj such as the *Brahmo Public Opinion*, *Tattva-Kaumudi*, *The Indian Messenger*, *Sanjibani*, *Nabyabharat*, *Modern Review*, *Prabasi* and many others, enriched Bengali literature and did much to foster literary activities in Bengal.

But, with all its impressive list of activities, Brahmoism as a religious movement began to lose its vitality, and in course of time ceased to be a dynamic force and lost its hold amongst the people. The main defects of the Sadharan

Brahmo Samaj were summarised by Sibnath Sastri as failure to establish a habit of domestic devotion amongst the members, lack of personal guidance and power of initiative or combining force, want of spiritual care and responsible ministration in its congregational life, lack of missionary spirit amongst the members, pecuniary difficulties, and absence of any regular and systematic philanthropic work undertaken by the Samaj. But the most important weakness of the movement, according to Sibnath Sastri himself, was the regard the members of the Samaj had shown for Western ideals and methods, rather than for those which were their own as Hindus. "It is thus that the Brahmo Samaj has come to be regarded by the outside public, by Hindus specially, as Christianity in another guise. There lies the root, perhaps, of the present aversion of our countrymen against the Brahmo movement." No franker admission or a better analysis of the causes of the decline of the Brahmo movement could be made. To these factors, is to be added the growth of what is generally called the Hindu revival movement in the seventies of the nineteenth century and finally the birth of neo-Hinduism of which Sri Ramakrishna was the prophet and Swami Vivekananda the exponent.

### **Hindu Awakening :**

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, orthodox Hinduism and Hindu social and religious rites and customs were subject to vehement criticism from various quarters. The Christian missionaries had challenged the very basis of Hinduism and they sought to demolish the entire Hindu religion and philosophy as false and primitive. It was Rammohun who first realised the need of reforming the Hindu religion and his rallying point was the monotheism of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Puranic religion and idolatry with all its elaborate rituals and sacrifices were the main object of his attacks. But though Rammohun never considered the Brahmo Samaj as a separate religious movement yet his religious views and activities came in opposition to an orthodox Hindu reaction led by Raja Radhakanta Deb. After the death of Rammohun, the Brahmo movement, as we have seen, underwent many doctrinal changes through successive stages

till it completely left the original lines laid down by its founder. Through all these years the Brahmo movement had faced resistance from the Hindu community in varying degrees. The missionary attacks on Hindu religion and culture also intensified under Alexander Duff and at times these became so intense and destructive that the Brahmos made common cause with the Hindus in defending the traditional religion and culture of India. But under Keshabchandra Sen and his radical followers the Brahmo movement became aggressive and it ceased to be a mere reforming or protestant movement. It became a separate religion most of whose doctrines and precepts were directly opposed to traditional Hinduism. Moreover what was originally a theological difference became a practical one which vitally affected Hindu ceremonies, rites and practices in day to day life. Naturally, it alarmed Hindu society and set up a strong reaction and determined opposition to the Brahmo movement. Thus the attacks of the Christian missionaries and particularly of the radical Brahmos in the second half of the nineteenth century aroused society and, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "those galvanic shocks aroused the sleeping leviathan". Devendranath Tagore had always apprehended this breach and tried to keep the Brahmo movement and its rites and practices as close as possible to the basic principles of Hinduism. Though the members of the Adi Brahmo Samaj always considered themselves to be Hindus, yet they faced a formidable opposition from the Hindu community. So when the Brahmo movement under Keshabchandra Sen completely went outside the pale of Hinduism the volume of orthodox resistance increased. Thus we find that a Hindu resistance to the criticisms and attacks on Hindu religion was always there since the days of Rammohun. With the progress of time and the change in the situation, resistance and the attempt to re-assert Hinduism grew intenser and more widely spread till they became a mighty movement. It will thus be unwise to ascribe any particular date to the beginning of the so-called "Hindu revivalism" but matters actually came to a head with the passing of the Native Marriage Bill in 1872.

## HINDU AWAKENING

This Native Marriage Act was applicable only to those brides and bridegrooms who made the declaration that they were not Hindus, Moslems or Christians. Thus it was openly and publicly made known that the Brahmos were not Hindus and Keshabchandra Sen categorically asserted that "the term Hindu does not include the Brahmo". The Adi Brahmo Samaj led by Devendranath Tagore and Rajnarayan Bose strongly resented this, and emphatically claimed that Brahmos were Hindus. The Hindu community set on foot an organized opposition to Brahmo offensive and efforts were made to reassert Hindu rites and customs. In this movement the Hindus and the members of the Adi Brahmo Samaj often joined hands. In many cases opposition took the form of social persecutions and other undesirable forms of hostility. But it soon made way for an organized efforts at the re-assertion of Hinduism. The National Association of Nabogopal Mitra and the Sanatan Dharma Rakshini Sabha (Society for the Preservation of Traditional Religion) founded by Kamalkrishna Deb and Kalikrishna Deb of Sobhabazar led the revival movement. The National Association organized a lecture on Hindudharmer Sresthata (Superiority of the Hindu Religion) by Rajnarayan Bose, the revered leader of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. Devendranath Tagore presided over that meeting. The lecture was widely acclaimed. The Dharma Rakshini Sabha also arranged lectures on Hindu religion, rites and customs which became very popular. The meetings of the Sabha were held in the house of Khelatchandra Ghose, one of the richest and most influential men in Calcutta. The Sabha was founded a few years earlier and its activities included the interpretation and exposition of the Hindu Sastras, the re-establishment of Sastric rites, and offering felicitations to renowned Brahmin scholars etc. The Sabha became very active during these years. While the Hindu revival movement was gathering momentum and catching the public mind, the schism in the Brahmo Samaj weakened that movement and it began to lose its hold on the younger people. The revival movement in Bengal coincided with the beginning of two other movements in other parts of India. These were the foundation of the Arya Samaj by Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) and the

Theosophic movement. The latter in particular allied itself with the Hindu revival movement in Bengal.

The Brahmo movement had begun to spread in other parts of India in the sixties of the nineteenth century, mainly owing to the efforts of Keshabchandra Sen. In 1867 on the initiative and enthusiasm of Keshabchandra, the *Prarthana Samaj* was founded in Maharashtra. It was considered as a sister church of the Brahmo Samaj. The difference in name was apparently due to a basic difference in the outlook of the members of the two Samajes. Unlike the Brahmos in Bengal the followers of the *Prarthana Samaj* did not "look upon themselves as adherents of a new religion or of a new sect, outside and alongside of the general Hindu body, but simply as a movement within it". The *Prarthana Samaj* undertook a programme of social reform, furthered the spread of education, and showed a welcome response to Western rationalism. The most illustrious leader of the Samaj was Mahadev Govinda Ranade to whom it owed much of its success.

The foundation of the *Prarthana Samaj*, the general trend towards an acceptance of Western philosophy and ideals, and the growing influence of Christianity set in a reaction in North-West India, particularly in the Punjab, where Swami Dayananda Saraswati, a great Sanskrit scholar, founded the *Arya Samaj*. His main motto was "Go back to the Vedas" and he sought to remodel the society on Vedic ideals. He was a monotheist and denounced the Puranic religion. He was also in favour of drastic social reforms. He began the *Suddhi* movement i.e. conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism. His ideas had some basic similarities to that of Ram-mohun, but he lacked a critical spirit and was averse to any Western ideas or philosophy. He considered all other religion to be false and claimed that "any scientific theory or principle which is thought to be of modern origin may be proved to be set forth in the Vedas". Dayananda's mission was a great success among the masses in North India, and in spite of his limitations and narrow outlook he did much to revive the shaken spirit of Hinduism. The impact of the *Arya Samaj* in Bengal was negligible, but the movement may be regarded as a part of the Hindu revival in general.



The Theosophical Society was founded in the United States by Madame H.P. Blavatsky and Col. H. S. Olcott in 1875. They came to India in 1879 and a Society was founded near Madras in 1886. But the Theosophic movement in India was later led by Mrs. Annie Besant. Theosophy identifies itself with the religion of each country and in India it identified itself with orthodox Hinduism. It defended every aspect of Hinduism and thus allied itself to the Hindu revival movement. The Society believed that all the problems of India could only be solved by a revival and reinstatement of ancient Hindu ideals and institutions. As Mrs. Besant wrote, "The Indian work is, first of all, the revival, strengthening, and uplifting of the ancient religions. This has brought with it a new self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future, and, as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation." The Theosophic movement lent support to all old beliefs and to occult mysticism. It believes in *Devachan* and *Pitrichan* in the next World, in the transmigration of the soul, in spirits and their fate after death, and *mahatmas* and adepts invisibly directing the destiny of mankind. The Society did much to promote education and the uplifting the women in India. But its unstinted support to ancient ideals, institutions and beliefs stood in the way of its wider acceptance or spread. Yet the Theosophic movement undoubtedly strengthened the Hindu revival movement and served as a great fillip to the orthodox Hindu revivalists in Bengal.

The fundamental object of the revival movement in Bengal was the defence of Puranic religion and all orthodox rites, customs and ceremonies. Among the early defenders of orthodoxy were Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachuramoni and Krishnaprosanna Sen. They vigorously defended every text and ceremony of orthodox Hinduism, often without any trace of rationalistic approach or outlook. Krishnaprosanna also laid emphasis on morality and righteousness. Sasadhar Tarkachuramoni in particular became very popular for some time, but ultimately did not prove to be an important force.

The spirit of reawakened Hinduism became evident in the works of contemporary writers. They glorified the ancient Indian culture and wrote on the heroic struggles of

the Rajputs, the Marathas and the Sikhs against the Moslems. The political awakening and the new born spirit of self-confidence took a decisive Hindu garb, or indeed the two became identified. Significantly, the *Jatiya Mela* founded in 1867 became known as the *Hindu Mela* from 1872.

One of the high-priests of the Hindu renaissance was Bankimchandra Chatterjee. To him Hinduism was a perfect synthesis of Beauty, Truth and Goodness and to this he gave expression in his writings and through rationalistic discourses. Bankimchandra started the journal *Bangadarshan* in 1872 and it ushered in a new age in the history of the nineteenth century Bengal. The preceding age may be called the Brahmo age and most of the leading journals and papers were either Brahmo or pro-Brahmo in origin and outlook. These papers and journals revealed a positive inclination towards Western ideals and philosophy and were averse to the Indian tradition and heritage. Bankimchandra himself was very much influenced by Western Rationalism and Positivism but he stood against the anglicising trend. In a letter to one of his friends, Bankim wrote, "I think that we ought to 'disanglicise' ourselves, so to speak, to a certain extent, and to speak to the masses in the language which they understand. I therefore project a Bengali Magazine." Thus started the age of *Bangadarshan* or the age of Bankim. The *Bangadarshan* originally had no religious object. It was intended to be a cultural paper modelled on *The Spectator* of England. But *Bangadarshan* played a great part in infusing a new life into the morbid and depressed Hinduism. With this paper was connected Akshoychandra Sarkar, Prafullaratan Bandyopadhyay, Chandranath Bose, Ramdas Sen, Haraprosad Sastri and other eminent writers and scholars. Articles on the Puranas, the Vedas and the Vedanta were published which expounded Hindu philosophy and culture and stressed their great values.

Bankimchandra at first supported Sasadhar Tarkachuramani in the paper *Prachar*. But soon the rationalist Bankim found it difficult to share or approve the views of Sasadhar who had abandoned reason and defended orthodoxy quite blindly. Puranic culture and religion had been denounced

by the Brahmos. Only Keshabchandra Sen had some regard for the Puranic religion, specially the *Bhagavata*. Bankim himself also aggressively criticised Puranic religion but he accepted those parts of it which could be explained by Reason. The first great work of Bankim in this connection was his *Krishnacharitra* (1886), where he expressed the view that Krishna had not properly been depicted in the Puranas. He emphasised the humanitarian rationalism of Krishna and depicted Krishna as a man. In *Dharmatattva* (1888) Bankim explained his ideal of religion—the *Anusilan Dharma* or the Religion of Culture. It emphasised that true religion is assimilation and not any particular dogma. It was as he said—*Vritti-nichayer Samanyasya* or cultivation of all the faculties. In his explanation and interpretation of the *Gita* we find Bankim as a Devotionalist. Here he expresses the view that Knowledge (*Jnan*) and Action (*Karma*) lead to devotion. He tries to work out a synthesis of Rationalism and Devotion. The same doctrine of *Karma* is also evident in his novels *Anandamath*, *Debi-chaudhurani* and *Sitaram*. Bankimchandra never appeared as an active and conscious propagandist of Hindu revivalism. His chief object was to propagate the *Gitatattva* and the *Krishnacharitra*—to represent Krishna not as Divine but as the ideal Man. Besides the *Bangadarshan* he was connected with two other papers, *Prachar* and *Sadharani* where he wrote on religious subjects. Though one of the inspirers of the Hindu awakening he seldom became involved in religious controversies. Once he had a long drawn controversy with Hasty, a missionary, in the columns of the *Bengal Harkara*. The subject was the supremacy of the Hindu religion, by which he meant the *Gitatattva* and *Krishnacharita*. He wrote under the pen-name of Ramchandra.

Besides Bankimchandra some other contemporary writers also gave vent to the new spirit of Hindu resurgence. One of them was Nabinchandra Sen, who also attempted to vindicate the Puranic religion and culture. In his trilogy *Raivatak*, *Kurukshetra* and *Pravash*—all on Krishna's life, he depicted Krishna as a man and not as an *Avatara* (Incarnation of God). Nabinchandra was influenced by Western

science, humanism and discoveries. He tried to reinterpret the Puranas and to explain their miracles with the help of Western theories, as for instance, he explained *Avataravada* (The Doctrine of Incarnation) by Darwin and Lamarck's Theory of Evolution. Similarly, he imagined the conflict between the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas in the Puranic age as similar to the conflict between the Church and the State in Europe. His object was to present Puranic religion in a new garb. He abandoned *Avataravada* and laid emphasis on humanism. He wrote *Amitabha* on the life of the Buddha and *Amritabha* on the life of Sri Chaitanya. In these two works both Chaitanya and Buddha were depicted as ordinary men rather than as divinities. Besides being influenced by Bankimchandra, he was also influenced by Gaurgovinda Roy's work *Sri Krishner Jivan O Dharma* (Life and Religion of Sri Krishna) which was published a little earlier. Gaurgovinda was a follower of Keshabchandra Sen, and was the first author to emphasise the humanitarianism of Krishna. Nabinchandra's reverence for the *Sakti* cult is evident from his translation of the *Markendyachandi*. Nabinchandra should not, however, be regarded as an active propagandist of Hindu revivalism. Personal devotion was the main factor in his writings. Though greatly influenced by Bankimchandra, there was a considerable difference between the two in their views regarding the Puranas. Bankim based his ideas on pure reason but the main traits of Nabinchandra were devotion and emotion. Bankim rejected many things in the Puranas and accepted only those which, he believed, stood the test of reason. But Nabinchandra accepted them all and tried to work out an explanation on the lines of modern reasoning.

Among other writers whose works may be linked with the spirit of Hindu awakening were Hemachandra Banerjee and Bhudeb Mukherjee. Bhudeb Mukherjee upheld the Puranic religion but he was more concerned with the preservation of the Hindu social order. This concern is evident in his collections of essays, *Parivariḱ Prabandha*, *Samajik Prabandha* and *Achar Prabandha*. But at the same time he accepted the good qualities of Christianity and Western civi-

lization and thus he represented a national synthesis. Hemchandra Banerjee's *Vrittasamhar*, a long narative poem, is a story taken from the Puranas and is charged with the spirit of new born nationalism. His *Dasamahavidya* was also taken from the Puranas and was an effort to explain the *Rupas* (the ten forms of the Mother Goddess) by the Theory of Evolution. He also tried to explain Puranic religion and culture by means of European logic, philosophy and history. The linking up of the names of Bankimchandra and other contemporary writers with the Hindu revival movement may be attacked by some critics. Actually there are many who dislike the very term 'Hindu revivalism' and prefer to call it Hindu renaissance or Hindu awakening. Be that as it may, it is certain that these writers contributed to the growth and strengthening of a new spirit of self-confidence which laid emphasis on Hindu religion, culture and tradition.

There were some writers who openly criticised the Brahmo movement in their works. Among these may be mentioned Jogendrachandra Bose's *Model Bhagni* and *Sri Sri Rajlakṣmi*, and Amritlal Bose's farcical dramas such as *Rajabahadur*.

## CHAPTER VI

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

In the later years of the nineteenth century religious differences gradually began to wane, while the national movement came to the forefront and political issues agitated the minds of the people. In the field of religion differences made way to a synthesis and Hinduism emerged with a new radiance that drew the admiration of the world. The prophet of this neo-Hinduism was the saint from Dakshineswar—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Sri Ramakrishna (his original name was Gadadhar Chatterjee) was born on 20 February, 1836 in the village of Kamarpukur in the Hooghly District. He came of a very poor but respectable Brahmin family. His father was a religious man well-known for his virtues and purity of mind. Since childhood Ramakrishna had an intense religious feeling and devotion. Though well versed in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and other Hindu sacred literature he had practically no school education. When about twenty years of age he became the priest of a temple of the Goddess *Kali*, established by Rani Rasmoni of the Janbazar estate, on the side of the Ganges in Dakshineswar, a few miles from Calcutta. In the same compound there were images of *Krishna* and *Siva*—thus symbolizing the harmony of the Sakta, Vaisnava and Saiva doctrines. *Kali*, the Divine Mother, became to Ramakrishna his living Mother and the Mother of the Universe. He worshipped, fed and even talked with the Goddess as a child does with its mother. So intense was his love and devotion to the Goddess and his indifference to the outside world that people thought him mad. His family members, with the hope of bringing him back to his senses, married him to Sarada Devi who was then only a girl of five. After marriage he came back to Dakshineswar, but his fervour and devotion increased beyond measure. For a long time he underwent painful suffering of the soul for the realization of God, until his desire was fulfilled. But Rama-

krishna was not to remain satisfied with this. He longed to attain perfection and realization of God in all His different aspects. In his quest for the higher truth he was helped by Bhairavi Brahmani and Tota Puri. From Bhairavi, a Bengali lady ascetic of the Tantric school, he learnt all forms of Tantric worship and different forms of *Yoga* which make one complete master of his body and mind. In 1864 Ramakrishna met Tota Puri, a great Vedantic ascetic. From him he learnt the truths of the Vedanta and after supreme efforts and long meditation he attained to the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*—indeterminate Realization of the Formless One, a stage where there is no perception of the subject or of the object.

Ramakrishna also practised different forms of Vaishnava *Sadhana* and realized the Vaishnava ideal of love for God. As he believed in all religious doctrines, Ramakrishna explored Islam in 1866 and Christianity in 1874 and arrived at an understanding of the highest purposes of both the religions. Thus after years of successful spiritual exploration and the realization of different religions, Ramakrishna arrived at the conclusion that all religions are true, each laying stress on one aspect of the *Akhandā Sachchidananda*—the undivided and eternal existence, knowledge and bliss. He proclaimed, "I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once". He referred to the various words for water in different languages and said, "The substance is one under different names and everyone is seeking the same substance ; nothing but climate, temperament and name vary. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him ! He will surely realise Him".

Though little known as yet, people gradually began to come to him in increasing numbers and all were overwhelmed by his purity, catholicity, simplicity, personal magnetism, and homely wisdom and by the immense depth and value of his philosophy and religion. But it was from 1875 that Ramakrishna began to draw the attention of the educated and influential people of Calcutta, after Keshabchandra Sen

had come into contact with him. The latter developed a great veneration for Ramakrishna and wrote on his teachings. Since then the incessant flow to Dakshineswar started and thousands of men found great solace and new light from the saint. Even those who belonged to different religious sects were inspired by his concept of universal religion which had become a living force with him. He knew no rest and never ceased to meet people who came to him. His health broke down but he would only say, "I would suffer willingly all sorts of bodily pains, and death also, a hundred thousand times, if by so doing I could bring one single soul to freedom and salvation." This he continued doing till the last day of his life, 16 August, 1886.

It has been rightly remarked that with Keshabchandra Sen the age of reform comes to an end and with Sri Ramakrishna the age of synthesis begins. The synthesis of Sri Ramakrishna was not merely the synthesis of various doctrines of different religions, for he "not only conceived but realised in himself the total unity of the River of God, open to all rivers and all streams". He believed that all religions are not partly but wholly true and they lead to the same goal, which is God. He revered the *Jnanin* (one who has knowledge), the *Bhakta* (one who has devotion), the believer in a formless God, the believer in God with forms, the believer in God with Brahman, and men who know the Truth. Before Ramakrishna—Rammohun, Devendranath and Keshabchandra had striven to build up a unity. But the synthesis of Sri Ramakrishna was spontaneous and was the direct result of the light of knowledge and vivid realization. Other attempts to build up a unity were dominated by a rationalistic, non-idolatrous and humanistic approach and outlook. There is a good deal of controversy regarding the extent of Sri Ramakrishna's influence on Keshabchandra Sen. Max Muller's view that the latter's New Dispensation was the result of Sri Ramakrishna's influence is shared by many, while there are others who disagree. But a closer study of the main tenets of the New Dispensation definitely indicate an influence of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching.

Though Sri Ramakrishna became the prophet of neo-



Hinduism, he never claimed to have founded any new religion. He preached the old religion of India which was founded on the doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads later systematised in the Sutras and developed in the commentaries of Sankaracharya and others. Nothing can be further from truth than to call him a Hindu revivalist. He breathed fresh air into Hinduism and brought it back to life. But this Hinduism was somewhat different from that which went before, though mainly based on the Vedanta and Indian to the backbone. Pratapchandra Mazumdar, himself a staunch Brahmo, who came into contact with Ramakrishna wrote, "It is Hinduism, but Hinduism of a strange type. Ramakrishna Paramahansa is the worshipper of no particular Hindu God. He is not a Shivaite, he is not a Shukta, he is not a Vaishnava, he is not a Vedantist, yet he is all these". As another writer describes him, he was "Bohemian as our traditional Baul, Catholic as Chaitanya, child-like as Eamprosad yet sober as a Vedantic Saiva, he was, indeed, all rolled into one." He worshipped the Goddess *Kali*, but not as a deity. Then who was she? Ramakrishna's Divine Mother was none other than the Absolute. She was One and the Many, and beyond the One and the Many. She was the Mother of the Universe, the Brahman of the Vedanta, the Atman of the Upanishads.

Idolatry had been the main object of criticism and denunciation throughout the century. But Sri Ramakrishna gave the most clear and heart-searching reply to its critics. "God is with form and without form. Images and other symbols are just as valid as your attributes. And these attributes are not different from idolatry, but are merely hard and petrified forms of it." From his realization he emphatically said, "Those who believe that God is without form attain Him just as well as those who believe He has form. The only two essentials are faith and self-surrender". Sri Ramakrishna is generally known as a *Bhakta* but Swami Vivekananda who was the only one to *know* the Master, said, "outwardly he was a *Bhakta* but inwardly *Jnanin*". Sri Ramakrishna distinguished between Knowledge and Devotion and stressed the devotional and practical side of the Vedanta. Compassion, Devotion and Renunciation, he preached, were the three

fruits of Knowledge. But he made it clear that renunciation of the world is not necessary for householders to realize God. What they need are love, faith, devotion and purity.

A striking feature of Sri Ramakrishna was his charm, sweetness, grace and love for all. Even for his adversaries and critics he had nothing but love. All classes of men and those belonging to different schools of thought came to see him and were influenced by him. Besides Keshabchandra Sen other Brahmos like Sibnath Sastri and Pratapchandra Mazumdar came to meet him and were benefitted by his teachings. He never taught, preached or gave sermons but only through conversation, simple stories and parables explained the most difficult and intricate questions on philosophy and religion and brought home to men's minds his message of love, devotion and purity. Sibnath Sastri admitted that he greatly realized the Universalism of religion from Sri Ramakrishna. The great Brahmo preacher Bijaykrishna Goswami became a devout Vaisnava, and this transformation of his life was largely due to the magic influence of Sri Ramakrishna. The latter at times frankly criticised the Brahmos' external adulation of God but he esteemed the Brahmo Samaj whose members were benefitted from discussions with him; his influence widened their understanding and softened the militant opposition to the Brahmo movement. Sri Ramakrishna cast a spell not only over his votaries but also over others who were different from him in every respect. The most frank confession which helps an unbiased reader to get an idea of Sri Ramakrishna's inexplicable, spell-binding influence on all is that of Pratapchandra Mazumdar. He wonders, "What is there in common between him and me? I, a Europeanised, civilised, self-centred, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, unpolished, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I, who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Muller and a whole host of European scholars and divines? ... And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same." Then he finds the answer and writes, "Our own ideal of religious life is different but so long as he is spared to us, gladly shall we sit at his feet to learn from

him the sublime precepts of purity, unworldliness, spirituality and inebriation in the love of God”.

The Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, has rendered service to millions of suffering people and has created a great tradition and ideal of organized social service. This spirit of social service was infused into Swami Vivekananda by Sri Ramakrishna. The latter was always distressed by the thought of the suffering humanity. He told, “Jiva is Shiva. Who then dare talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service, for man must be regarded as God!” He spent hours, day and night, listening to the sorrows of innumerable men and women who came to him for solace and comfort and by his sympathy, love and message he relieved them of their sufferings and distress. He once rebuked Vivekananda when the latter requested his Master to open to him the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, as he did not consider the personal realization of God as the highest goal of life. Sri Ramakrishna asked his favourite disciple not to be so selfish or to have such an one-sided ideal. He wished him to translate the highest knowledge into the best service of mankind. In all women he recognized the Mother, even in the most degraded women.<sup>1</sup> He was the very embodiment of love and service to men. He said, “Let me be condemned to be born over and over again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of help to a single soul”. It is no wonder that Romain Rolland, who made a detailed study of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, pronounced to millions of his readers that “Allowing for differences of country and of time Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ”.

The great task of continuing Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual heritage and spreading his gospel all over the world was taken up by Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda, whose original name was Narendranath Datta, was born in Calcutta in 1863. Since his boyhood Narendranath felt the irresistible desire to know the Truth of religion. He was

<sup>1</sup> He never had any conjugal relations with his wife Sarada Devi. In her he saw the Divine Mother and worshipped her as such. Sarada Devi—the Mother—as she was known to all, was equally great and throughout her life worked for the success of Sri Ramakrishna's mission.

attracted by the monotheism of the Brahmo Samaj of Keshabchandra and joined the movement. But his soul did not find the answer that it was seeking. When he had almost become a sceptic, one day hearing of the wonder priest of Dakshineswar, he went to see him out of curiosity. At the very first sight Sri Ramakrishna discovered the man he was looking for in his mind so frantically. It took quite a long time for the educated, intellectual and rationalistic Narendranath to acknowledge his Master. But the Master made no mistake in his choice and before he died Sri Ramakrishna bequeathed all the authority he had to his favourite disciple. In 1886 when Sri Ramakrishna died Vivekananda organized the disciples of the Master and started his work of giving a concrete shape to Sri Ramakrishna's religion of love, sacrifice, devotion and service to humanity. In 1888 he went out on a pilgrimage over the whole of India and it was during these years of travelling throughout the length and breadth of the country that the vision of spiritual unity of India appeared to him no longer as a dream but a practical reality. In 1893, after overcoming almost insurmountable difficulties, this monk from India with only a beggar's bowl, but possessed of an iron will and volcanic power, attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. There he spoke on Hindu religion and his speech was not a defence of Hinduism but a remarkable exposition marked with such boldness and confidence that it roused the enthusiasm of the delegates to the Congress and impressed the minds of millions of Americans and others in Europe. He came back from America as the national hero, the inspirer of a new generation of Indians. Wherever he went he carried everything before him with the dynamic power that emanated from his soul. In 1899 he paid a second visit to America and Europe. Before his visit he said, "The last time they saw a warrior. Now I want to show them a Brahmin". Once more he represented the East to the West and devoted his efforts to achieving a perfect understanding between the two as he saw in India and Europe "two organisms in full youth. . . two great experiments neither of which is complete". After coming back from Europe he lived for only two years, during which he continued the great work that

his Master had started ; and before he died on 4 July, 1902, he had inspired the people and had paved a new path for the future.

The mission of Swamiji's life was to unify India under the banner of the Vedanta. But his interpretation of the Vedanta or the Hindu religion was not founded on the commentaries of the old Sastris and Pandits. He had fully inherited the synthesis of Sri Ramakrishna and gave a new interpretation of traditional Hinduism. "The word Vedanta", Swamiji said, "must cover the whole ground of Indian religious life". He had learnt from his Master that God can be worshipped as with form and without form. He said, "We reject none, neither theist, nor pantheist, monist, polytheist, agnostic, nor atheist, the only condition of being a disciple is modelling a character at once the broadest and the most intense. . . we believe that every being is divine, is God". He held the view that even the doctrines of the Jainas and the Buddhists were the offspring of the Upanishads believing in the *Ahimsa Srutis*. He boldly proclaimed, "I go forth to preach a religion of which Buddhism is nothing but a rebel child, and Christianity, only a distant Echo." He wanted to make religion dynamic and was not a revivalist in any sense of the term. He faced bitter opposition from the orthodox Hindus and his views were directly opposed to those of Hindu revivalists like Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and Krishnaprosanna Sen. Swamiji had no sympathy for the Hindu orthodoxy and lent it no support. He categorically said that the priest-craft and meaningless sacrifices and rituals have caused much evil.

The religion that Vivekananda preached was Hinduism no doubt, but it was all-comprehensive. He was a Vedantist and he considered the Upanishads as a great source of power. He did not reject the Puranas altogether and accepted those parts of the Puranic religion which were in conformity with the Vedic principles. He found in the Puranas the seeds of highest devotion. He was far above any sectarianism. He admired the democratic and aggressive spirit of Islam and wished to instil that spirit into Hinduism. In a letter to one of his Moslem friends Swamiji wrote, "For our motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—

Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope”. He welcomed whatever there was good in Western culture and civilization. He fully realized the need of a material civilization and ridiculed those who spoke against it. He said, “we talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour”. He was rigidly opposed to isolation. “Give and take is the law... Expansion is life, contraction is death. We must mix, therefore, with all the races of the earth”. He diagnosed the root cause of Indian degeneration and stagnation and warned, “No man, no nation, my son, can hate others and live. India’s doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *Mlechchha* and stopped from communion with others.” What did he want India to take from the West? “From the great dynamo of Europe, the electric flow of that tremendous power, vivifying the whole world... We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement.” He proclaimed a new doctrine in which both the East and the West were the giver and the taker. He said, “In India the quality of *Rajas* (Spirit of activity) is almost absent, the same is the case with *Sattva* (Spiritual quality) in the West”. He wanted a blending of the two qualities. “Make a European Society with India’s religion” was his advice. He believed in the power and potentiality of all men. In the words of Brajendranath Seal, “Vivekananda went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of self”. In the Parliament of Religions every delegate spoke of his own religion. But Vivekananda alone spoke of all the religions “and embraced them all in the Universal Being”. The whole Parliament looked at the young monk with wonder and listened to him with admiration when he said, “May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you... The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of

growth". He always reminded the people of the glory of human nature and said that God is best realized by people in their fellow men. "Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless Ocean which I AM", was his immortal message to mankind. This was not the voice of an orthodox Hindu or a protagonist of the 'Hindu revival movement' but one whose life was dedicated to the resurgence or awakening not of the Hindus or Indians only but of the whole of mankind.

Vivekananda's success at Chicago had a tremendous influence on India. He had given expression to India's growing nationalism and spirit of self-help and independence. He spread the voice of India all over the world and challenged the long existing idea of inequality between the Eastern and Western peoples. He was the very embodiment of courage, self-confidence and strength. In the religion that he believed and spread there was no place for weakness. "Vedanta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error, and the greatest error, says the Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this or that". The speeches of Vivekananda became a source of inspiration to the national movement and inspired the nationalists to be more courageous and stronger, and to work with greater success. He took no direct part in politics but his contribution to the growth of political consciousness in the country was no less than any political thinker or politician. He called on the young men of India to foresake all weakness and fear and to have faith in their own power. "Your country requires heroes; be heroes. Stand firm like a rock. Truth always triumphs". "Heaven is nearer through football than through Gita. We want men of strong biceps". "What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel—gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going to the bottom of the ocean and meeting Death face to face". Words such as these were like molten lava pouring from a volcano to destroy all weakness, cowardice, hesitance or timidity. He was proud of his Indian birth and 'Man Making' was the mis-

sion of his life. He never used the word 'Nationality', but the nation was his God. "For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything". It is no wonder that books of Vivekananda were found in every house that the Bengal Police searched. He welcomed the Congress movement as he could foresee that "a nation is being made out of India's different races". Swamiji had great faith in the masses. He urged his followers to educate the people and give them their rights. He boldly said, "The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead". The life and the voice of Vivekananda instilled a burning patriotism in the minds of the Bengali youths and paved the way for the Swadeshi upsurge of 1905.

Sri Ramakrishna's mission of service to mankind was fulfilled by Swami Vivekananda. He roused the spirit of other disciples and formed the Ramakrishna Mission which dedicated itself to the service of suffering humanity. "The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body. Of course, all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage... From all of you, I want this that you must discard for ever, self-aggrandizement, faction mongering and jealousy. You must be all forbearing, like Mother Earth... Let me help my fellowmen—that is all I seek". This was the ideal that he set before the Mission, before his countrymen and thousands of men responded to his clarion call for service.

The new age inaugurated by Raja Rammohun Roy in a sense, reached its climax during Swami Vivekananda's lifetime. Swamiji called Rammohun "the first man of new regenerate India". There are many differences between the two which do not need any elaboration. But we find at least three basic similarities in the ideas of the Raja and Swamiji, as was pointed out to his disciple Sister Nivedita by Swamiji himself. Firstly, in the acceptance of the Vedanta, secondly, in preaching patriotism and thirdly, in



the love of the motherland that embraced all, irrespective of any sectarian, religious or other differences. Swamiji himself is said to have taken up the task for which the breadth and foresight of Rammohun had prepared the way. But while Rammohun's was the voice of a genius reaching only the intellect of a few, "Vivekananda's was the voice of the soul. It went into the heart of the nation and restored it firmly on its feet". The awakening of New India reached its apex in Vivekananda, whom Romain Rolland calls the St. Paul of the Messiah of Bengal who is Sri Ramakrishna. Vivekananda travelled throughout the world "joining scientific reason to Vedantic faith and the past to the future". He spread the message of a union between the East and the West as equals and free personalities. He died young, but not before fulfilling the great task of his Master and giving shape to his vision of New India. "From his ashes, like those of the phoenix of old, has sprung anew the conscience of India—the magic bird—faith in her unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of his ancient race".

## CHAPTER VII

### SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS : ISWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

It is only very natural that the far-reaching revolutionary changes that took place in the nineteenth century should affect our society and end the period of stagnation. The century witnessed a number of social reform movements and sincere efforts at removing many of the social evils. Some of these attempts at reform succeeded, a few were only partial successes and others failed completely. The worst sufferers from the social evils and prejudices were the women and consequently all the principal social reforms had the common objective of their emancipation.

As in other fields of activity, Raja Rammohun Roy was the pioneer of social reform movements in India. We have already discussed his aversion to the prevailing social evils and abuses and his keenness and determination to fight these evils and to restore the women to their rightful place in society. Of all the efforts he made in this direction, the most important was his campaign against the inhuman and dreadful custom of *Sati*—burning alive of Hindu widows. The movement for the abolition of *Sati* was the earliest and perhaps the most important of all the social reform movements and it had actually started long before Raja Rammohun took up the cause.

#### **Movement for the abolition of Sati :**

Even in the Moslem period, rulers like Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Akbar, Jahangir and others tried to check the practice of *Sati*. The Sikh Guru Amardas, the Maratha Chieftainess Ahalya Bai and the Peshwas also prohibited the practice within their territories. But it was not until the nineteenth century that any organized effort was made at abolishing completely this age-old, horrible and inhuman practice. Government measures, attempts of Christian mis-

sionaries and the growth of an enlightened Indian public opinion combined to make the movement for its abolition successful.

The Danes at Serampore, the Dutch at Chinsurah and the French in Chandernagore had prohibited *Sati* within their jurisdiction much before the East India Company had taken any measure against it. The latter at first followed a policy of non-interference in the social and religious affairs of the people. In 1772 some British officials and Christian missionaries had appealed in vain to the Government to stop this practice. The Government was too apprehensive of offending the religious sentiment of the people and of a possible reaction in the army to take any step.

The policy of Cornwallis and his Council was that the officers of the Company should use only persuasive methods in checking the practice. The Government was against the use of coercion and firmly believed that with the growth of an enlightened public opinion the practice would gradually disappear. But while the Government remained inactive the Serampore missionaries led by Carey started a determined agitation against *Sati*. In March 1799, Carey witnessed a *Sati*-rite for the first time in his life, and it shocked him terribly. In 1804 the Serampore missionaries took a census of *Sati* cases within a 30 miles radius round Calcutta. Carey also consulted the Pandits of the Fort William College and made a study of the Hindu Sastras on which the practice was believed to be based. These convinced him that *Sati* was not a compulsory practice for all Hindu widows. One of Carey's closet friends was Udney—a member of the Governor-General's Council. Through Udney, Carey submitted a Memorial to Lord Wellesley's Government against the practice and urging the Government to take measures against the same. The Deputy Magistrate of Bihar, J. R. Elphinstone, also wrote a letter to the Government in the same vein. The Government now asked the judges of the Nizamat Adalat to "ascertain how far the practice of *Sati* was founded on the religious opinions of the Hindoos". After consulting the Pandits the Nizamat Adalat forwarded its findings to the Government. It stated that widows belonging to the four

main castes might perform the *Sati*-rite except under certain circumstances. It further asserted that a widow after renouncing her *Sankalpa* (determination to perform the rite) might recover her purity by undergoing a severe penance. The Adalat did not advise the immediate abolition of the practice but suggested measures for checking it. Lord Wellesley, however, did not take any step in this matter, as he left for England in 1805. George Smith, the biographer of Carey, writes, "Had Lord Wellesley remained Governor-General a year longer Carey would have succeeded in 1808 instead of having to wait till 1829". It may be mentioned in this connection that it was Carey who drew the attention of the Government against another inhuman practice, though much less practised,—the throwing of children in the confluence of the Ganges and the sea. Carey submitted a report on the barbarous practice and Lord Wellesley prohibited it in August 1802. This was the first instance of Government interference with the so-called "religious observances" of the people.

It was Lord Minto who gave effect to the recommendations of the Nizamat Adalat in 1812. It was declared that *Sati* "must be allowed in those cases in which it was countenanced by religion, and prevented wherever it was not". In subsequent years—1813, 1815 and 1817 the Government took some measures to check the practice, but these hardly proved effective.

Among the Indians, the most important and interesting view was that expressed by Mritunjaya Vidyalankar, a great Sanskrit scholar and a Pandit of the Supreme Court. He declared in 1817 that the practice was completely voluntary and was by no means compulsory. On the subject of *Sahamarana* (burning in the pyre of the husband) he said that the Sastras varied, but they were all one regarding the necessity of leading an austere life. He categorically said that there was nothing wrong in renouncing *Sankalpa* or in persuading a widow to renounce her *Sankalpa*. He asserted that *Anumarana* (burning oneself in a separate pyre after hearing the news of the death of the husband) was purely voluntary and had no Sastric injunction behind it. It is really remark-

able to find a Sanskrit scholar like Mritunjaya emphatically asserting that "A thousand Shastras are not capable of inducing death ; for that is an event universally dreaded by the human species". Mritunjaya Vidyalkar thus anticipated most of the arguments later advanced by Raja Rammohun Roy. But while the former remained contented with theoretical arguments the latter successfully launched a forceful agitation against the evil practice.

Before discussing the movement started by Rammohun, one must acknowledge the efforts made by some of the officers and Judges of the Company to prevent the practice. Among these were Charles Harding (1806), Lushington (1813), Courtney Smith (1821), Leycaster and Walter Ewer. The last named was the Acting Superintendent of Police in the Lower Provinces. In a letter to the Judicial Secretary to the Government, written in 1818, he made some candid remarks and bold suggestions. He said that the sacrifice in most cases was due to persuasion or force on the part of greedy Brahmins and interested relatives. It was beneficial to the surviving relatives who inherited the property of the deceased and spiritual bliss of the widow was not the main consideration. He expressed the view that *Sati* should be abolished and that there was little ground for any apprehension of the consequences of its abolition. But he was against partial measures to check the practice as these opened another door for Police extortion. Ewer's suggestions were, however, rejected by the Government.

Lord Hastings was aware of the need of abolishing *Sati* but he did not think it wise to take any immediate action. He expressed the hope that educated Indians themselves would help towards its gradual extinction. Lord Hastings also realized the need of organizing English public opinion in favour of the movement for its abolition and after going back to England he did much to raise the public voice in support of the move.

In 1823 the Government of India was asked by the Court of Directors to consider the question of abolition again and was assured of its approval in any necessary measure. The Chief Judge of the Nizamat Adalat, Harington, advocated its immediate abolition. But Lord Amherst, in spite of the

insistence of other members of the Governor-General's Council, decided against any measure. Not that the Governor-General was unaware of the need for its abolition, but he was very apprehensive of possible reaction to such a step in the native army in particular. Thus we find that since the closing years of the eighteenth century the necessity of the abolition of *Sati* had been increasingly realized by the Government and particularly by many officials. But a fear of possible reaction in the mind of the people stood in the way of any drastic Government measure.

This was the problem that the Government faced and it took an organized enlightened public opinion in Bengal to prepare the ground for the abolition of *Sati* and remove the fear of the Government. The leader of the agitation for the abolition of *Sati* was Raja Rammohun Roy. It was mainly owing to the movement led by Rammohun that *Sati* was ultimately abolished. When the orthodox Hindus petitioned against the Government restrictions on the practice, Rammohun submitted a counter-petition to the Government. In it he blasted the contention that *Sati*, as observed, was a religious observance and declared, "all these instances ... are murders according to every Shastra, as well as to the common sense of all nations". He organized an anti-*Sati* vigilance party whose members kept watch on different burning *ghats* to prevent *Sati* sacrifice in violation of Government restrictions. He also published a number of tracts against *Sati*. The first one came out in 1818. In it he severely criticised the practice and argued that *Sati* in its present form was not sanctioned by the Sastras. His arguments were sought to be counteracted by Kasinath Tarkavagish, an orthodox Sanskrit scholar. The second tract of Rammohun was published in 1819 and significantly its English translation was dedicated to Lady Hastings. In it he refuted the arguments of Kasinath Tarkavagish, who had attempted to justify the practice by raising the question of *desachar* (long prevailing custom in the country). In the next year he published his *Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance*. In this tract Rammohun criticised the practice, analysing its economic implications,

and also defended some other fundamental rights of women. He emerged as a protagonist of emancipation of women and as a humanitarian. His third tract on *Sati* was published a few years later in 1829 in which he repeated his old arguments.

The effect of Rammohun's efforts on Lord Hastings' Government is evident from his Despatch of 15 August, 1822, in which he wrote: "His lordship in Council does not despair of the best efforts resulting from the free discussion of the matter by the people themselves independently of European influence and interposition; and it only remains for him to watch carefully the indications of a change of sentiment amongst the people... and to encourage to the utmost every favourable disposition".

The contemporary journals with progressive ideas also took up the cause. Rammohun's own journal the *Sambad Kaumudi* was in the forefront and the missionary papers *Samachar Darpan* and the *Friend of India* also zealously supported the campaign for the abolition of *Sati*. Later the weekly *Bagadul* edited by Nilratna Halidar also supported the movement.

While the agitation for the abolition of *Sati* was gathering momentum the orthodox community did not remain idle. The *Samachar Chandrika* carried out a campaign in favour of the continuance of the practice and it also tried to mobilize public opinion in favour of *Sati*. Thus Bengali public opinion was practically divided into two opposing groups on the question and feelings ran very high. The Christian missionaries of course supported the abolition movement with all their might and they also tried to rally public opinion in England against the practice. One such notable effort was that of James Pegg whose tract *Suttee's Cry to Britain* drew much English public sympathy for its abolition. He also founded in Coventry an association named *The Society for Promoting the Abolition of Human Sacrifices in India*.

Lord Amherst was succeeded by Lord William Bentinck who was a "reformer by temperament". He decided to deal with the question immediately and decisively. Of course cir-

cumstances were in his favour. He was assured of the support of the Court of Directors and English public opinion. He was fortified with the recommendations of the Nizamat Adalat and a large number of officials and Judges. Moreover, he could count on the whole-hearted co-operation of an enlightened Indian public opinion.

Lord Bentinck consulted a number of people on the problem among whom were Wilson the great Orientalist and Rammohun Roy. Wilson expressed the view that total abolition of the practice would lead to discontent among the people and would be only a partial success. Rammohun did not favour immediate total abolition, but advocated increasing checks on it and the use of the indirect agency of the Police. He was in favour of abolishing the practice "quietly and unobservedly". The views of Rammohun have naturally confounded many people, because he was the leader of the agitation for its abolition. Miss Collet seeks to explain it as Rammohun's "constitutional aversion to coercion". That might be the case but nevertheless it fails to satisfy altogether.

But Bentinck became convinced of the necessity of immediate and total abolition of the practice and on 4 December, 1829, *Sati* was declared "illegal and punishable by the criminal courts". The official Bengali translation of the Regulation was made by William Carey. The Regulation touched off a great agitation in the country and the orthodox community became alarmed as they saw in it a Government interference with the religious affairs of the Hindus. The *Samachar Chandrika* launched a violent campaign against the Government Regulation and the conservatives claimed the support of the majority of the people. Raja Radhakanta Deb and other leading orthodox Hindus took the initiative and submitted a petition to the Governor-General against the Regulation. A similar petition signed by another group of men with legal opinions was also submitted. The progressive section led by Rammohun were prepared to take up the challenge and they presented a congratulatory address to Lord Bentinck. In it they said that the practice was intro-



duced out of "jealousy and selfishness, acting under the cloak of religion, but in defiance of the most sacred authorities". Some 800 Christian inhabitants of Calcutta also supported the move of the Governor-General. A public meeting was also held in Calcutta in which Pandit Gaurishankar Tarkavagish supported the arguments against the practice.

Lord Bentinck rejected the orthodox petition and stated that no attack has been made on the Hindu religion. He advised them to appeal to the King-in-Council, if they so desired. The newly founded *Dharma Sabha* still continued the battle and a petition was sent to the Privy Council against the Government Regulation. A large sum of money was collected for the purpose. Rammohun continued his campaign with increased vigour and energy and, as we know, one of the main objects of his journey to England in 1830 was to plead for the Regulation there. He submitted a petition in favour of the Regulation in July 1831, to the House of Lords. The Privy Council heard the case and finally dismissed the petition against abolition of the practice. It caused great rejoicing in the progressive group and much disappointment among the orthodox community. The Young Bengal had by now joined the campaign for social reforms and their paper the *Jnananveshan* proposed to form an association of reformers and to send a congratulatory letter to the Privy Council.

For the next few years the *Sati*-sacrifice took place here and there in stray cases but soon it became obsolete. This was a great triumph of Raja Rammohun and enlightened Indian public opinion. The social reform movement had achieved a great success and it encouraged other social reforms in the country.

### **Rammohun and other social reforms :**

The successful movement for the abolition of the *Sati* rite was undoubtedly the greatest triumph of Rammohun as a social reformer. But besides that he was fully aware of the need of eradicating other social evils and categorically condemned them and he provided much food for thought for the succeeding generation of reformers. The practice of

*Sati* had been abolished but the problem of the Hindu widows had not been solved. There were innumerable obstacles in the amelioration of their condition and in the way of their resettlement. With this in view he published his *Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance*. In it he depicted the miserable life which Hindu widows lead. He also sharply criticised polygamy, Kulinism and bargaining over the marriage of girls. In one of the issues of the *Sambad Kaumudi* he made "an appeal to the rich Hindus of Calcutta to constitute a society for the relief of destitute widows, upon the principles of the Civil and Military Widows' Fund established by Order of Government". He was so much opposed to polygamy that in his will he inserted a clause disinheriting any son or any other relative who was polygamous. These views of Rammohun only reveal his deep understanding of the problems of women's emancipation, and he knew that these social evils are so interlinked that all of them constitute parts of the same problem. His views on child-marriage and widow remarriage cannot be ascertained from his writings though we are told by one of his biographers that he was averse to child-marriage and while in England he expressed the desire to take up the cause of widow remarriage on coming back to India.

Another remarkable feature of Rammohun's social views was his condemnation of the caste system. He published a Bengali translation of the first chapter of a Sanskrit work against caste named *Vajrasuchi* by Mritunjayacharyya. Denouncing the caste-system he wrote in a letter, "I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling." In another place he wrote that the division into castes has caused disunity among the people. He advocated the adoption of the *Saiva* form of marriage which makes no discrimination of age, caste or race. Rammohun thus had a very wide range of ideas of social reforms though he did not have the satisfaction of achieving practical success excepting in the abolition of *Sati*. The citadel of the

caste system was too strong to be brought down by Rammohun or indeed by any other reformer or group of reformers in the nineteenth century. But the practices of polygamy, child-marriage and Kulinism were considerably checked in later years, and the widow remarriage movement soon became one of the most important social reform movements of the century.

### **Widow Remarriage Movement :**

Attempts at introducing widow remarriage were not altogether new in the nineteenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Raja Rajballabh of Dacca tried to introduce widow remarriage in the local Hindu society. He was prompted to make an effort by a tragedy of his personal life. His own daughter became a widow at a very tender age and he longed to give her in remarriage. For this he consulted the learned Pandits of Dravida, Tailanga, Benaras, Mithila and other places. They all gave the opinion that widow remarriage was permissible under certain circumstances. But the efforts of Raja Rajballabh were not successful mainly owing to the opposition of the more formidable Maharaja Krishnachandra of Nadia and his Pandits, regarded as the custodians of orthodox Hinduism.<sup>1</sup>

Rammohun, we know, was sympathetic to the widows and longed for the improvement of their condition. But he is not known to have done anything concrete towards legalising their remarriage. From the thirties of the century the question of widow remarriage gathered importance. This was only natural, as the movement was a logical consequence of the abolition of *Sati* in 1829. Once more we find the Christian missionaries taking up a cause of social reform. The *Samachar Darpan*, in its issue dated 14 March, 1835, published a letter of an unmarried *Kulin*

<sup>1</sup> The Peshwas levied a tax known as *Patdan* on the marriage of the widows. Widow remarriage was very common among the non-Brahmins in Maharashtra. Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur, Rana Zalim Singh of Kotah and some other persons are also known to have made efforts for the marriage of widows.

Brahmin girl in which attention was drawn to the sufferings of Bengali widows and the Government was urged to take necessary steps for mitigating their sufferings. On the very next day some other women of Chinsurah supported the first correspondent in a letter to the editor of the paper and in conclusion wrote, "Why cannot a wife marry again after the death of her husband when a husband can marry after the death of his wife? Cannot a woman have desire for marriage like a man? Oh dear fathers and brothers! Consider these carefully in your mind and you will realise how you find us in grief and also insulted like slaves".

The Young Bengal paper *Jnananveshan* also took up the cause and in its issue dated 27 April, 1837, it welcomed the news that some well-known gentlemen of Calcutta including Motilal Seal and Haladhar Mallik had planned to call a meeting with the object of promoting women's education and removing superstitions against widow remarriage. Motilal Seal was well-known for his orthodox views and one is surprised to find him as an advocate of widow remarriage. But apparently, the proposed meeting did not materialize and a correspondent of the paper raised the question again after a few months (21 October, 1837). He pleaded for widow remarriage and requested the editor of the paper to advance the cause and said that "the editors of *Harkara*, the *Courier*, the *Englishman*, the *Reformer* and the *Darpan* are also willing to remove this distress of the Hindu widows." In conclusion he said that he was aware of the opposition expected to come from the editor of the *Samachar Chandrika* but added that "his objections should not stand in the face of our sense of justice", and finally the correspondent declared his intention "to come forward to protest against the objections that may be raised by the Editor of the *Chandrika*". Unfortunately, the correspondent's name is not known but his style and his apparent connection with the editors of the other leading English and Christian missionary papers lead us to believe that the correspondent was Rev. Krishnamohun Banerjee. A change in outlook towards the problem among the Hindus was also noticeable, about which the *Friend of India* wrote: "The marriage of Hindoo widows has lately engaged much of the attention of the

Hindu community and the repeated discussions of it in the native papers appear to indicate the approach of some favourable change".

In the forties, the need of its introduction was emphasised by another well-known Derozian paper the *Bengal Spectator*. In April 1842, a correspondent raised the question and expressed the hope that prejudices regarding widow remarriage would soon be removed and the proposed change would come in the near future. The editor of the paper, in its next issue, stressed the need of women's education and widow remarriage and asked a few enlightened men "to set the example practically". The *Bengal Spectator* continued to advance the cause and in January 1843, a correspondent pleaded for Government measures to legalize widow marriage. He argued that without Government interference such measures could not be taken. He concluded by saying that "we should apply, supplicate and pray till we force the Government to grant us the boon".

The British India Society sought to discuss the problem of widow remarriage with the *Dharma Sabha* and the *Tattvabodhini Sabha* in 1845. But nothing resulted from this. It is rather strange that the *Tattvabodhini Sabha* did not show any interest in the negotiations. This was possibly due to Devendranath's unwillingness to rouse Hindu orthodox opposition. Some influential men of Calcutta like Nilkamal Bandopadhyay and others also attempted in vain to introduce it. One Shyamacharan Das also sought the opinions of the Pandits on the question in order to remarry his widowed daughter. The Pandits gave him some kind of a certificate of permission. This was, however, of very little use. Even an effort by the Maharaja Srischandra of Nadia failed to have the desired effect in Hindu society. It was not until Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar took up the cause of widow remarriage that it became a historic and dynamic movement of social reform, eventually succeeding in 1856.

Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar was born in 1820 in Birsimha village of Midnapore district. His father was Thakurdas Bandopadhyay, a learned Brahmin of principle

and pure soul known for his integrity and straight-forwardness. Vidyasagar's mother, Bhagavati Devi, was a pious lady of kind disposition. After studying in the village *Pathsala* Iswarchandra came to Calcutta with his father for education. As he was very poor it was exceedingly difficult for Iswarchandra to get admitted into college. After great difficulties the boy Iswarchandra entered the Sanskrit College and proved to be one of the most brilliant students of the institution. In 1841 he passed from the College with the title of *Vidyasagar*, and became the Head Pandit of the Fort William College. He now started to learn English at home. In 1846 he became the Assistant Secretary of the Sanskrit College for a short time. Later in 1851 he got the principalship of the institution. Iswarchandra's student days in the Sanskrit College, extending from 1829 to 1841, were not only important in his own life but proved to be most significant for the whole country. Young Iswarchandra saw with his own eyes the evils of society and was pained with the decay and degeneration that had set in. The terrible sufferings of the womenfolk, the licentiousness of the richer people, the moral degradation of the people in general had a profound impression on the mind of the young scholar and made him determined to start a crusade against social evils.

The miserable condition of Hindu widows was one of the first evils to draw his attention. Vidyasagar started to write in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. He realized that the widow remarriage campaign, to have a general appeal to the people, must be backed by reference to *Slokas* in the Sastras. He began to make an intense study of the Sastras with this purpose and at last found what he wanted in a *Sloka* in *Parasar Samhita*.<sup>1</sup>

It was : *Gate mrite pravajite kliveca patite patau*  
*Pancasvapatsu narinam patiranyo bidhiyate.*

(Women are at liberty to marry again if their husbands be

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, said that the Pandits whom Raja Rajballabh of Dacca consulted, first referred to the *Sloka* in the *Parasar Samhita*. (*The Bengal Spectator*, May 1842, p. 51, *Calcutta Review*, 1856).

not heard of, die, retire from the world, prove to be impotent or become outcastes).

Vidyasagar wrote a book on widow remarriage which was published in 1853. In the book he argued in favour of widow remarriage and blasted the arguments against its introduction with a rare display of scholarship and logic and the book was an evidence of his intense feelings for the sufferings of the womenfolk. The book caused a stir in the country and a heated controversy started. It became the talking point everywhere. Towards the end of 1855 an enlarged edition of the book was published. He remained undaunted by all adverse comments, criticism and reaction and proceeded with the campaign. A petition signed by many distinguished people of Bengal was submitted to the Legislative Council praying for legalising widow marriage and for removing all obstacles to the inheritance of the sons of remarried widows. The signatories included Devendranath Tagore, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Iswarchandra Gupta, Ramgopal Ghose, Rajnarayan Bose, Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar and others. The whole country was agog with excitement. Widow remarriage and Vidyasagar became the subject matter of folk-lore and a household topic of discussion. J. P. Grant—a member of the Legislative Council, took great interest in the matter and the Act legalising widow remarriage was passed on 26 July, 1856.

A petition against the Act was submitted by the orthodox Hindus led by Raja Radhakanta Deb. It was signed by 30,000 men, but it proved abortive. The first widow marriage took place with great pomp and clamour between one Srischandra Vidyaratna and Kalimati Devi, a widow who was only eleven. Madanmohun Tarkalankar played an important part in this marriage and it was a great personal triumph for Iswarchandra Vidyasagar who had devoted all his time, energy and money to the success of his mission.

The widow remarriage movement scored a legal and moral triumph, but as a practical and widespread social reform it failed. After the early excitement and clamour was over, Vidyasagar found himself almost alone, others having left him in the midst of great difficulties. But among the very few

who stood by his side was Rajnarayan Bose. Vidyasagar still stuck to his work undaunted by adverse circumstances. He gave a fitting reply to his critics, who accused him of earning a name at the expense of others, when his own son married a widowed girl. But even the lion-hearted Vidyasagar and all his sincere efforts failed to make widow remarriage widely prevalent.

The causes of the failure are not far to seek. The basic cause, as pointed out by Vidyasagar himself, was that the Sastras and the social customs and usages in the country do not always agree. The laws of social customs are too rigid and strong to be broken even by reference to the Sastras. There were other actors in the situation. The orthodox reaction and opposition was indeed very formidable. The social institutions which he tried to demolish ultimately proved to be even stronger than the iron will and determination of Vidyasagar and his associates. Moreover, after Vidyasagar none came forward to continue the work with needed zeal and efficiency. There are some who share the view of Ranade, a great reformer of Western India, that a social reform movement can hardly succeed without a religious basis. The movement led by Vidyasagar did not have such a foundation, though the latter referred to the Sastras to justify his campaign.

In conclusion it must be added that though the movement met with only partial success, yet it had great significance. It stirred society and made the people think. The need of social changes was realized more clearly than ever before. Social evils were exposed and the movement helped to advance society. The movement may be called the first real mass movement in the country. The signatories to the petition submitted to the Government in favour of widow remarriage included all classes of men representing various walks of life. The social upheaval that was caused and the new thinking that was started were by themselves no mean achievements.

#### **Other social reform movements and Vidyasagar :**

In his book on widow remarriage Vidyasagar exposed the evils of Kulinism and the extent to which it crippled society.



The evils of Kulinism and polygamy were interconnected. The *Hindu Patriot* took the initiative and published some anti-polygamy tracts written by Shyamacharan Sarkar. A number of petitions against polygamy signed by Vidyasagar, the Maharajas of Burdwan, Nadia, Dinajpore, Rani Sarnomayee of Kassimbazar and fifty thousand men and women of Bengal were submitted to the Government in 1856. These prayed for Government interference against polygamy "which was practised on a very large scale in a manner the most offensive to morality and decency". At the same time Ramprosad Roy, son of Rammohun Roy, reprinted his father's *Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females*, which added moral strength to the reformers. The Maharaja of Burdwan, in a petition to the Legislative Council, made a trenchant criticism of Kulinism and said, "The Coolins marry solely for money and with no intention to fulfil any of the duties which marriage involves". These petitions, however, had little effect on the authorities who were unwilling to take such drastic steps and on principle were against interference in the social and religious affairs of the people. The outbreak of the Mutiny in 1857 put an end to any hope of Government measures for eradicating the harmful social customs and practices. In 1866 another petition was submitted to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Sir Cecil Beadon, by Raja Satyasaran Ghosal of Bhukailash, Vidyasagar and others. Beadon viewed the petition sympathetically and promised to do his best. But nothing fruitful resulted from these efforts.

Social reform and the emancipation of the women were as it were in every vein of Vidyasagar and always preoccupied his mind. In 1850 he wrote an article on evils of early marriage in the *Sarvasubhakarī* edited by Motilal Chatterjee. He drafted a list of pledges to be taken by his close associates. These were that they would educate their daughters and would not give them in marriage till they were eleven. They would not consider whether the bridegroom is a *Kulin*, *Sotria* or *Maulik* but would marry the daughter to the right man. If willing, a widowed daughter should be remarried. A son should not be married before he is 18. No one would marry again with one wife living and would

not marry his daughter to anyone who had already been married. This pledge was taken by the closest associates of Vidyasagar. It may appear to be rather idealistic in its approach but it reveals the ideas of Vidyasagar and there lies its importance.

One of the worst evils of contemporary society was alcoholism. It was Pearycharan Sarkar who first took the lead against this growing social menace. He founded the Bengal Temperance Society in 1864, which did good work in checking the evil. From the very beginning Vidyasagar was a great patron of the Society. Radhakanta Deb, Bhudeb Mukherjee, Keshabchandra Sen and Rajnarayan Bose also supported the temperance work.

The efforts of Vidyasagar had succeeded in creating great interest in matters of social reform. In 1854 the *Samajannati Vidhayini Suhrid Samiti* (Association of Friends for Promoting Social Welfare) was formed with Devendranath Tagore as its President. Among its members were Pearychand Mitra, Kisorichand Mitra, Harischandra Mukherjee, Akshoykumar Datta, Rajendralal Mitra and others. The *Samiti* petitioned in favour of widow remarriage and discussed other problems of social reform. The condemnation of social evils and the spirit of social reform also found expression in contemporary literature. Pearychand Mitra's *Alaler Ghurer Dulal*, Madhusudan Datta's *Ekei-Ki-Bale Sabhyata* and *Buro Saliker Ghade Roe* are some of such literary instances.

### **Women's education and Vidyasagar :**

One of the important features of women's emancipation in the nineteenth century was female education as the two were practically inseparable. The history of the growth of organized women's education in this period is a long one, and we shall only refer to its history in bare outline. But before that it must be borne in mind that education of women in India was nothing new. It can be traced back to the earliest period of Indian history and it has rightly been remarked that "practices of close seclusion, and of non-

education, are an innovation upon the proper Hindu system." Even in the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth century there were quite a number of educated girls, particularly among the upper classes. Numerous girls received elementary education of reading and writing and the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Annadamangal* and mythological books on *Sri Krishna* and the Goddess *Durga* were their great favourites. There was, however, a dearth of educational institutions for women and in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a general reluctance to send the girls to school.

The Christian missionaries were keen to educate native girls and one of the earliest efforts in this direction was made by May, who founded a girls' school at Chinsurah in 1814.<sup>1</sup> The School Society, founded in 1817, also discussed the question of female education and the members were divided on the issue. The Secretary of the Society, Raja Radhakanta Deb, though the leader of the orthodox Hindus, was a great patron of women's education and encouraged it in various ways. In some of the primary institutions run by the Society there was co-education of boys and girls and annual prize distribution ceremonies were held in the residence of Radhakanta Deb.

In April 1819, on the initiative of some Baptist missionaries, was founded the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society with Rev. W. H. Pearce as its President. A number of girls' schools were founded in Calcutta under the auspices of the Society and Raja Radhakanta Deb was one of its chief patrons. He published and presented a book on Female Education (*Strisikshavidhayak*), written by Pandit Gaurmohun Vidyalankar, to the Society, which did much to promote women's education during six years of its existence.

In 1821 some members of the Calcutta School Society, succeeded in moving the British and Foreign School Society of London to send out Miss Mary Anne Cooke to Calcutta to promote women's education. She arrived in November, 1821, but found herself in a difficult situation when the

<sup>1</sup> Supra, p. 60.

School Society failed to finance her work. The Church Missionary Society came to her rescue and Miss Cooke started her work under its auspices. She learnt Bengali and got down to her task with great zeal and devotion. In the course of a year, 22 girls' schools were founded. Two years later she married Rev. Wilson, a missionary, but continued to work for the education of girls.

The Ladies' Society for Native Female Education under the patronage of Lady Amherst was founded in 1824 and took over the management of the girls' schools run by the Church Missionary Society. David Hare was its active supporter and under the guidance of Mrs. Wilson about 30 girls' schools were managed by the Society in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. A central school for girls was started by the Ladies' Society in Calcutta in 1826. Raja Baidyanath Roy of Calcutta donated 20,000 rupees for the building of the School, which was opened by Lady Amherst. The School was a great success, and Adam made a reference to it in his Report. The Christian missionaries also ran orphans' boarding establishments and made arrangements for domestic teaching in upper-class families. A notable advocate of women's education was Krishnamohun Banerjee whose essay on *Native Female Education* had won a prize and had gained the admiration of all. With all their efforts the Christian missionaries, however, failed to draw girls from middle-class families to their schools. The majority of the girls who came to them for education belonged to the lower classes or to Christian families, and quite a few came to school through the temptation of getting clothes, ornaments or other presents. The chief drawback of the missionary institutions was that they imparted religious instruction and had a positive missionary motive behind their education. Of the Christian Boarding Houses for girls, Adam wrote that they "tend to break the ties between parents and children in those cases in which the former are alive, especially if they are not Christians".

The need of a girls' school for imparting non-sectarian and secular education was widely felt for a long time and it was at last removed by the foundation of the Hindu

Balika Vidyalaya in May 1849, on the initiative of J. E. Drinkwater Bethune, Legal Member of the Governor-General's Council and President of the Council of Education. The difficulties that Bethune faced were considerable, but with Iswarchandra Vidyasagar by his side as co-worker and the encouragement of enlightened men like Ramgopal Ghose, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Justice Sambhunath Pandit and Pandit Madanmohun Tarkalankar, all difficulties were overcome. Vidyasagar was the first Secretary of the School. Bethune and Vidyasagar devoted much time, energy and resources to the running of the Vidyalaya. In the school carriage was written a Sanskrit *Sloka* to the effect that it is the duty of a father to educate his daughter. The object was to convince the people of the necessity of women's education. Till the last day of his life Vidyasagar took great interest in the education of women and patronised the *Strisiksha Vidhayini Sammilani* that was founded in different districts to promote the cause of female education. Vidyasagar, while working as the Government Inspector of Schools of Nadia, Hooghly, Burdwan and Midnapore, organized in all 35 girls' schools and 20 model schools in the districts. But on this issue he came into conflict with Mr. Gordon Young, the newly appointed Director of Education. Young did not approve the foundation of the girls' schools and refused to pass the teachers' Salary bill. The bill was ultimately passed by the Lieutenant Governor, but the difference between Vidyasagar and Young could not be settled and the former resigned from the post in 1858.

The foundation of the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya caused much stir in society and the institution came in for both criticism and admiration. While the conservatives looked upon it as a dangerous step, which would spoil the girls' characters, the progressive section of the people saw in it a great step forward towards progress and women's emancipation. The school gave impetus to the cause of women's education and a number of girls' schools were soon opened in various districts. Bethune's contribution to the cause of the education of women in Bengal, his efforts for the development of the school and his love for the students can only be compared to that of David Hare's, like whom he earned

the loving respect of the people of the land. Fittingly, after the death of Bethune the school was renamed after him. Though there was marked initiative and interest among both Indians and English officers in their personal capacities for women's education, the Government's attitude towards the question continued to be lukewarm. Lord Dalhousie favoured the extension of women's education in India and he made an annual donation of Rs. 8,000/- for five years for the maintenance of the Bethune School. In Wood's Despatch of 1854 the need of women's education was emphasised and in subsequent years Government granted money for girls' schools. The outbreak of the Mutiny had an adverse effect on the Government policy towards the education of women but that phase was soon over. Education of women continued to make rapid progress and the Brahmo Samaj took keen interest in it.

### **Vidyasagar the Educational reformer and the Man :**

*Vidyasagar* was a title that was conferred on successful candidates appearing in an examination of the Sanskrit College. There were many such students, but the history of Bengal knows only one Vidyasagar—that is Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Literarily it means 'Sea of knowledge' and it was truly applicable to Iswarchandra. But he was far more than a great scholar and social reformer. He was a foresighted educational reformer as well. He opened the Sanskrit College to non-Brahmin boys and included English education in the College's curriculum. He was mainly a believer in Western methods of education though he wanted a sensible and practical blending of Eastern and Western science and learning. It was his object to free education from religious or other sectarian influences. Man-building was his ideal of education. He was keenly interested in educational problems and in the experiments that were made in Europe at that time. He made a careful study of different subjects like English National Education, Mass-education, Model Schools, Primary education, Teaching methods etc.

Vidyasagar had an essentially classical foundation and was an erudite Sanskrit scholar. But he never uncritically

accepted all that was written in the Sastras and other Sanskrit books and had no hesitation in rejecting many aspects of Sanskrit learning as unnecessary. His Report on the methods of education in the Sanskrit College submitted to the Education Council in 1850, and his criticism of the Report submitted by Valentine (Principal of the Benaras Sanskrit College) after inspecting the Sanskrit College in Calcutta (1853), throw a flood of light on Vidyasagar's views on education. Some of his criticisms and suggestions were drastic and revolutionary in character. He severely criticised many old Sanskrit texts and grammars. Even some of the stories of *Hitopodesha* and *Panchatantra* were criticised for their vulgarity. In his Report (1850) he advised the rejection of *Sisupalvadha*, *Kiratarjuniya* and *Naisadharita*. *Mugdhabodha*, he wrote, "is an imperfect grammar". He pleaded that "the study of the 28 Tattvas ought to be discontinued. Though they are of use to the Brahmanas as a class of priests, they are not at all fitted for an academical course". He wanted the students of the Sanskrit College to learn English so that they might read Western books on philosophy and make a comparative study of the subject. He wished the students to be critical and rationalistic in their approach. He did not believe in the *Mayavada* (Doctrine of Illusion) of the Vedanta and as such he disagreed with the recommendation of Valentine that Sanskrit College students should read Bishop Barcley's *Inquiry* which contains a similar philosophy. He totally disagreed with Valentine's suggestion that a class of scholars should be created who would find out similarities between the East and the West and try to create a 'compromise' between Indian Philosophy and Western Science. Vidyasagar considered any such attempt to be impractical and injurious because that would only encourage the already prevailing orthodox attitude that everything is to be found in the Sastras. He saw in it an unnecessary and harmful appeasement of the orthodox Sanskrit scholars. The expansion of education and the education of the masses should be the object, and for that the establishment of more and more schools and colleges and the writing of suitable text books were a desideratum. Vidyasagar was a materialist and he favoured such education as has relation

with material life. But at the same time he did not overlook the value of academic knowledge. He protested against the suggestion that *Smriti* and *Vedanta* should be omitted from the Sanskrit College syllabus. Of Philosophy he said, "True it is that the most parts of the Hindu System of Philosophy do not tally with the advanced ideas of modern times, yet it is undeniable that to a good Sanskrit scholar their knowledge is absolutely required".

A significant achievement of Vidyasagar was the development of the Metropolitan Institution which was later named after him. Mainly owing to his efforts it became a striking example of a non-official, secular institution for higher studies with an exclusively Indian teaching staff. Vidyasagar had a deep affection for his students and he wanted a similar relation between all teachers and students. He strongly resented the use of coercive methods by teachers and, if necessary, he did not hesitate to take stern measures to prevent any such occurrence.

Vidyasagar was undoubtedly influenced by both Eastern and Western ideas. While it is needless to point out his deep roots in Indian learning and culture, there may be a difference of opinion in assessing the extent of Western influence on Vidyasagar. His faith in and admiration for English education and Western methods of education have already been discussed. Even as a youth he was one of the signatories of the application submitted by the students of the Sanskrit College for the inclusion of English education in the College. He had made a deep study of Western literature and Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Huxley, Mill and Spenser were some of his favourite authors. He was, however, a born social reformer and politics was not his line. Some think that he was influenced by Comte. But there is not enough evidence to assert it. The great political and social changes that were taking place in the West, such as the making of a new Italy, the activities of Shaftsbury, Bright, Cobden, the social work of Miss Mary Carpenter, the humanitarian works of Miss Cobbe and Miss Nightingale, and the liberalism of Abraham Lincoln must have made a deep impression on Vidyasagar. But Vidyasagar's humanism and his reforming zeal, his compassion for



suffering people, were not the product of Western Humanism or of any other foreign idea. These were in-born in him and it has rightly been said that even if he had not read Western books or come to Calcutta, he would still have been a social reformer and made his mark. Western knowledge and learning only made his zeal more broad-based and enlightened and helped him to understand the real nature of the social problems of the day.

Individualism, dynamism, manliness, realism and a materialistic outlook were some of the salient traits of his character. In him we find a fine blending of Idealism and Realism. His Sanskrit learning and Western knowledge had helped him to assimilate all that was good in both. In his revolt against social evils, stagnation and moral degeneration, and in his outlook on life he was no less severe or less Western than the Young Bengal, but at the same time he never lost the 'Indian' in him. As Michael Madhusudan observed, Vidyasagar had "the genius and wisdom of an ancient sage, the energy of an Englishman and the heart of a Bengali mother".

He realized the need of a strong base for a good education. That is why he wrote textbooks for school students which were invaluable for generations. He was one of the makers of the Bengali language. But over and above all he was a man with a capital 'M'. Social reform and Vidyasagar are synonyms in the history of Bengal and in all his social or other work his manliness is evident. In the words of Rabindranath, Vidyasagar is mainly to be remembered not for his learning, not for his compassion or kindness, but for the manliness of his personality and for his iron will. Tagore compares him to a lone rebel carrying the banner of revolt from one end of the battle-field to the other, ignoring all dangers and difficulties. The revival of humanism in human beings was the mission of his life. What had so long occupied the intellect now occupied the heart, it became clearer, livelier and broader than ever before.

#### **The Brahmo Samaj and social reforms :**

The social reform movements found great allies in the Brahmos, with whom Iswarchandra Vidyasagar was in close

association. His connection with the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* and his contribution to the progressive role of that paper is well-known. As we have already seen, social reform was an integral part of the Brahmo movement. Rajnarayan Bose was a close associate of Vidyasagar and Akshoykumar Datta was a supporter and admirer of Vidyasagar's social reform activities. Akshoykumar, besides being in favour of widow remarriage, was against early marriage and polygamy. He pleaded for women's education though he did not favour university education for them. But he believed in pre-marriage contact, discussion and love between the bride and the bridegroom as essentials for happy married life. He considered it the duty of a husband to educate his wife with a view to developing her intellect and religious aptitude and to dispelling prejudices and superstitions. Devendranath, though conservative by temperament, supported the widow remarriage movement and was not apathetic to social reforms.

With Keshabchandra Sen social reform became the major objective of the Brahmo movement. On the vital need of the emancipation of women, Keshabchandra said, "No country on earth ever made sufficient progress in civilization where women were sunk in ignorance. In fact the actual position of the women is an index to the social status of the nation to which they belong". Keshabchandra wanted to remove the ignorance and superstition of women, for which he undertook a programme for women's education. The *Brahmika Samaj* was founded and the *Bamabodhini Patrika* and the *Paricharika* were started. He also had a scheme for educating family women who were unwilling or unable to go to educational institutions and for them was founded the *Antopur Stri Siksha Sabha*. A rescue home for innocent girls and orphans were also founded. Keshabchandra envisaged a system of mass education and he started a Working man's Institution with that purpose. His *Sulabh Samachar*, a cheap weekly newspaper, had a similar object. The introduction of inter-caste marriage was another cherished object, which he had the satisfaction of seeing achieved in 1872. He bitterly opposed the growing drunkenness in society and, making a trenchant criticism of the excise policy of the Government, said, "Is not this liquor traffic carried on in India simply,

solely and exclusively for the sake of revenue ?” It was Keshabchandra who injected in the minds of the Young Brahmos the spirit of social reforms and differences in social outlook, as we have seen, were one of the main causes of the schism in the Brahmo Samaj. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj continued the work of social reform and much good work was done in this field by the newly-established Samaj. In the last decade of the century national consciousness and with it political agitations became the vital concern of all. But by that time society had greatly advanced, many evils had been eradicated, Indian womanhood had largely been emancipated, though a good deal of work still remained to be done.

The nineteenth century, however, had marked the beginning and development of social changes and it remained for posterity to press for the ultimate goal, which, many would say, has yet to be achieved.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GROWTH OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS : THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The principal cause of the anarchy, confusion and disintegration of the eighteenth century was the total absence of patriotism and political consciousness among the people. Unstable governments, intrigues, conspiracy, revolts and assassinations became so common that people took little interest in these things and were totally indifferent to the problems of the country or to changes in the Government. This paved the way for foreign domination. Even in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was hardly any sign of political consciousness in the country and the people were completely unaware of their rights and privileges. No attempt was even made to protest against Government measures taking away or encroaching on the fundamental rights and liberties of the people.

One of the striking trends of the Indian Awakening was the growth of political consciousness leading to the beginning of the national movement for independence. Several factors were responsible for this development. The British rule was one of those important factors as it is only natural for the people of a subjugated country to strive for their independence. Besides that the contact with the West and particularly the influence of English literature with its new ideas and ideals on the educated young Indians was very significant. Between the years 1795 and 1799 the ideas of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume and others began to reach the inquisitive and responsive Bengali middle-class mind. The middle-class intellectuals were considerably attracted and influenced by the English Revolution, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. The Western impact was first felt in Bengal. "Bengal was moved far more powerfully than the other Indian provinces by the new ideals of freedom and equality of the 18th Century European

Illumination, which the British brought with them". European Rationalism and Individualism made a profound impression on the Bengali intellectuals. The *Bangadut* in its issue dated 20 June, 1829, made a very apt reference to the part being played by this class and predicted that the middle-class would ultimately lead the country to independence. The economic ruin of the country leading to famines and other unbearable sufferings of the people and the arrogance and highhandedness of English officers and individuals were other important contributing factors.

The origin of national consciousness is to be traced to Raja Rammohun Roy and it is rightly remarked that "As the history of Western political thought practically begins with the name of Aristotle, the history of political thought in modern India begins with the revered name of Raja Rammohun Roy". It was Rammohun who started political movements on constitutional lines. But some scholars seek to trace the beginning of 'spontaneous mass movements' in the peasants' and other occupational class revolts that broke out much earlier at different times in different places in the country. These violent local revolts broke out mainly for economic reasons and had practically no connection with the political agitations. Among these revolts or violent outbreaks in the post-Plassey period may be mentioned the struggles of the weavers and *malangis*, the peasants' revolt against Debi Singha—Agent of the Zamindar of Dinajpore, the peasants' revolt in Bankura, the Choar revolt (1799) in Midnapore, and the Saninyasi revolt (c. 1760—c. 1800) in northern Bengal. These revolts, however, can hardly be regarded as spontaneous mass movements. They were local outbreaks caused by economic factors relating to a particular class of men in a particular locality. It will be too far fetched to give these revolts any national colouring though they no doubt reveal a discontent against the Company's economic exploitation.

Rammohun Roy initiated the first constitutional agitation in India. In 1823 the acting Governor-General Adam issued a Press Ordinance taking away the liberty of the Press. Rammohun with a few of his associates submitted a Memorial to the Supreme Court against the Ordinance and sent a petition to the King-in-Council. The Memorial is described

as the "Areopagitica of Indian History" by Miss Collet. In his appeal to the King-in-Council, Rammohun wrote :

"....a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed ; whereas, where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed force of the Government, the people continued ready for insurrection....

"It is well known that despotic Governments naturally desire the suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloquy which ever attends the exercise of tyranny or oppression and the argument they constantly resort to is, that the spread of knowledge is dangerous to the existence of all legitimate authority, since, as a people become enlightened, they will discover that by a unity of effort, the many may easily shake off the yoke of the few, and thus become emancipated from the restraints of power altogether, forgetting the lesson derived from history, that in countries which have made the smallest advances in civilization, anarchy and revolution are most prevalent--while on the other hand, in nations the most enlightened, any revolt against governments, which have guarded inviolate the rights of the governed, is most rare, and that the resistance of a people advanced in knowledge, has ever been—not against the existence,—but against the abuses of the Governing power".

This was a remarkable document full of forceful arguments, analysis and foresight which, however, failed in its immediate purpose. But as a protest against the Press Ordinance Rammohun discontinued the publication of the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, in the last editorial of which he made a scathing criticism of the objectionable decree.

The Jury Act of 1827 introduced religious discrimination in the law courts by declaring that henceforward any Hindu or Mohammedan could be tried by either Europeans or native Christians, but no Christian, either European or native, was to be tried either by a Hindu or a Mohammedan juror. Moreover, no Hindu or Mohammedan was to get a seat in the Grand Jury. Rammohun opposed this Act and through his friend Mr. J. Crawford submitted petitions against the Act signed by Hindus and Moslems to the both Houses of the Parliament. In his letter to Crawford, Rammohun clearly stated that a country like India could not possibly be expected to be suppressed by force as Ireland had been. He wrote, "Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote

situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy."

In 1830 he protested against Government measures to tax rent-free lands. He was against the monopoly rights enjoyed by the East India Company and one of the objects of his journey to England was to demand more rights and privileges for the Indians at the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1833. He submitted before the Select Committee of the Parliament, which was appointed to consider the question of renewal, demands for the substitution of English for Persian as the official language in the courts of law; separation of judicial and executive functions in the administration of criminal justice; appointment of native assessors in the Civil courts; trial by Jury; employment of Indians in the Civil Service; and the consultation of Indian public opinion before enacting legislation. These demands of Rammohun were very significant, particularly the last one, which was an indirect reference to the need of an elected Indian legislature. Though these demands mostly remained unfulfilled, Rammohun laid the lines along which the constitutional agitations in India progressed in the subsequent years.

All his writings on politics reveal sound scholarship, analysis and clarity. His views were influenced by the political thought of Montesquieu, Blackstone, Bentham and other Western thinkers. In his paper *Sambad Kaumudi* for the first time public grievances found a place for expression. Utopian idealism had no place in his political thinking. He did not raise the question of political rights for all, but was primarily concerned with the rights of the educated classes. He frankly stated, "The peasantry and the villagers in the interior are quite ignorant, and indifferent about either the former or present government. But men of aspiring character and members of such ancient families as are very much reduced by the present system, consider it derogatory to accept the trifling public situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British Government, and are decidedly disaffected to it." These views may appear to be narrow in the light of modern political thinking but considering the

time when he expressed these views there was undeniably much sense and logic in what the Raja said. Rammohun of course looked upon the British rule in India as a necessary and beneficial period of political tutelage. But at the same time he had the vision of a free India in the distant future, as he said to Victor Jacquemont, the French traveller, "India requires many more years of English domination so that she might not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming her political independence". He had great faith in the capacity of Indians and stoutly refuted the prevailing Western idea of "Asiatic effeminacy". It is true that Rammohun failed to rouse political consciousness among the masses and thought highly of the English sense of justice. Even admitting the fallibility of his economic and political views, his claim as the pioneer of all the political movements in India cannot be seriously challenged.

Young Bengal continued the political agitations that started from the time of Rammohun. They were known for their patriotism and advanced political thinking. Among them the most politically minded were Tarachand Chakravarty, Dakshinaranjan Mukherji, Rasik Krishna Mallik, Ramgopal Ghose and Pearychand Mitra. These young men were greatly influenced by the revolutionary doctrines of 'natural rights' and 'equality'. It was Derozio who infused in them the spirit of patriotism. Himself intensely patriotic, he was inspired by the ideas of Tom Paine, Hume, Gibbon, Bacon and others. French Revolutionary ideas had made deep impressions on his mind and he was in favour of liberty in every sphere of life. He had joined the movement for equal rights that was started in his community and said, "I love my country and I love justice, and therefore, I ought to be here". We find an echo of the patriotism of Derozio in a poem written by Kasiprosad Ghose, a Derozian, in 1861 :

" But woe me ! I never shall live to behold,  
That day of thy triumph, when firmly and bold,  
Thou shalt mount on the wings of an eagle on high,  
To the region of knowledge and blest Liberty".

Of the political and economic views of Young Bengal,



the *Englishman* wrote in May 1836 : " In matters of politics, they are all radicals, and are followers of Benthamite principles... They think that toleration ought to be practised by every government... with respect to the questions relating to Political Economy, they all belong to the school of Adam Smith ".

They were so excited and elated by the July Revolution of 1830 that some of them even hoped for the outbreak of a similar revolution in India. Rammohun's fight for a Free Press was continued by the Derozians and the movement bore fruit in 1835 when Sir Charles Metcalfe removed the restrictions imposed on the Press. A "Free Press Dinner" was given to Metcalfe at the Calcutta Town Hall on 9 February, 1838, attended by many distinguished men, and a toast was proposed to "the memory of Rammohun Roy". Another campaign of Rammohun continued by the Derozians was the demand for opening high Government posts to Indians. The Charter Act of 1833 had made a provision for that step, but the clause had not been made operative. The Derozians re-opened the issue and asked for its implementation ; consequently "English educated" youths were appointed as Deputy Collectors and from 1843 the post of Deputy Magistrate was also offered to Indians. From 1830 to 1843 the political, social and other progress made in the country owed much to the Young Bengal associations, papers and journals. In subsequent years, political agitation did not remain confined among any particular group or school of thought and people belonging to all groups and shades of opinion joined hands in the national movement.

Besides the Derozians, the associates of Rammohun were also continuing the tradition of political agitation started by the latter in their own way and they were also joined by the conservatives. Among these men were Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore, Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamal Sen and others. All of them had great admiration for and faith in the English rule, but they had developed a consciousness of their own rights and privileges. But their faith in English sense of justice was gradually shaken and we find a staunch loyalist like Dwarakanath Tagore saying that the English "have taken all which the

Natives possessed ; their lives, liberty, property, and all were held at the mercy of Government". Bhabanicharan Bando-padhyay in his paper *Samachar Chandrika* was also drawing the attention of the Government to the grievances of the people and urged for their redresses. The contemporary papers and journals also reflect a tone of criticism of the Government. The Serampore missionaries in a way contributed to the growth of political consciousness. In 1827 they advised the people of Bengal to send a Memorial to England to get their right to sit on the Grand Jury. The Bengalis were urged to ask for a share in the administration. They forcefully supported the principle that responsible Government posts should be opened to Indians. The *Samachar Darpan* argued that the apprehension that much corruption would follow "does not prove that natives ought for ever be excluded from responsible situations in the land of their birth".

In 1837 (12 November) was founded the Zamindary Association later re-named Landholders' Society. Among those who took the initiative were Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Dwarakanath Tagore, Radhakanta Deb, Ramkamal Sen and W. C. Hary--editor of the *Englishman*. The object of the Society was "to promote the general interest of landholders", but nevertheless the Society did not sacrifice the interest of the *ryots*. The general welfare of the people was also in their view. According to Rajendralal Mitra, the Society set an example to the people of fighting constitutionally for their rights, asserting claims and giving expression to public opinions. He regarded the Society "as the pioneer of freedom in this country". This appears to be an overestimate of the Landholders' Society, but nevertheless it was one of the earliest of associations in Bengal with a political object.

The Landholders' Society worked in co-operation with the British India Society in England. The latter Society was founded in England in July 1839, on the initiative of Adam (the friend and associate of Rammohun) to work for "the improvement of the condition of the native population" and to create English public interest in Indian affairs. In 1842 Dwarakanath Tagore went to England with the

object of contacting friends of India in England and to bring to India an eminent English orator to educate Bengali youths in methods of constitutional agitation. He returned to India in 1843 with George Thompson, a leading member of the British India Society, noted for his oratory, and his support of the anti-slavery campaign and of Free-Trade in England.

George Thompson succeeded in creating great enthusiasm among the educated young men in Bengal, among whom the students of the Hindu College were in the forefront. He delivered a number of lectures to the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge and at other places. He urged his listeners to abhor expediency, to stand courageously for the cause of righteousness, to organize themselves for securing the protection and security of the English Constitution, and not to depend only on newspaper agitation. He suggested the foundation of a political association similar to the British India Society. On 20 April, 1843, was founded the Bengal British India Society. Thus, in the words of Bholanath Chandra, "David Hare had prepared the soil, on which George Thompson planted the first seed of Native political education in our country". The newly established Society expressed its loyalty to the British rule and the Society was made open to all. Its object was "the collection and dissemination of information, relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws and institutions, and resources of the country, and to employ such other means of a peaceable and lawful character, as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights, and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow-subjects." The Bengal British India Society, however, failed to achieve anything tangible and it soon lost much of its appeal as a political association.

Though not connected with either of the political associations mentioned above, a notable political thinker of the period was Akshoykumar Datta. Well versed in the works of Western writers, he possessed a spirit of scientific enquiry and was a believer in Pure Rationalism. He believed in the need for a representative character in Government and argued that no Government had an inherent right to tax the people unless it looked after their allround improve-

ment. It was the duty of the Government to give the people education and make them healthy, happy and prosperous. He took up the cause of the peasants and pleaded for them in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. His books exercised considerable influence on the educated young men of Bengal. He criticised the English administration and complained that under it the people have suffered in health, in longevity, strength and religion. Dependence in any form was detested by him. Akshoykumar, at times an idealist and emotional in his criticism, undoubtedly contributed much to the growth of political consciousness among educated men.

In the forties of the nineteenth century the growth of political consciousness had considerably slowed down and political reforms made little progress. This was due to the apparent failure of the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society to create any interest among the people and to give the required leadership in political issues. Bhola-nath Chandra aptly remarked that "one represented the aristocracy of wealth, the other aristocracy of intelligence". But when the political situation had become insipid one event brought in a dramatic change and stirred the whole country. This was the Black Bills controversy which started in 1849.

In 1849 Mr. Bethune, Law Member of the Government of India, introduced four Bills with the object of bringing British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of the local courts, thus abolishing the existing privilege of trial by the Calcutta Supreme Court alone. The proposed Acts were :

- (1) Abolishing exemption from the jurisdiction of the East India Company's criminal courts
- (2) Declaring the privileges of Her Majesty's European subjects
- (3) An Act for the protection of judicial officers
- (4) Trial by jury in the Company's courts.

The proposed Acts caused great consternation among the British-born subjects of the company, who started an organized agitation against the 'Black Acts'—as they called these. The Indians strongly supported the Bills and Ram-gopal Ghose wrote a tract in defence of the Bills named *Remarks on the Black Acts*. He gave fiery speeches in favour

of the Bills, for which he earned the name 'Indian Demos-thenes'. The Bills, however, had to be withdrawn owing to the European community's opposition. The controversy served as an eye-opener to the politically conscious Indian community, who now realized their weakness. The leaders of both the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society felt the need of an organized movement and a strong political organization. The impending change in the constitution of India at the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1853 also necessitated a strong Indian political organization. These led to the amalgamation of the two Societies and the foundation of the British Indian Association on 31 October, 1851.<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of the British Indian Association was a landmark in the history of national movement in India. Its first President was Radhakanta Deb, its first Secretary was Devendranath Tagore and the members included Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitra and others. Thus it marked the unity of the orthodox Hindus, the Brahmos and even the ultra-radicals for a common cause. Its membership was open only to Indians. The object of the Association was to seek for improvements in the local administration of the country and in the system of Government laid down by the Parliament. From the very beginning the Association had an all-India outlook and this is clear from its first annual Report which states with satisfaction "the formation at Poona, Madras and Bombay successively, of Associations of a similar character, which, though they have elected to carry on operations independently of each other, cannot but largely contribute towards the important end of acquainting the British public with the state of feeling in India with regard to its past and future administration". The second annual Report also states that the Association "have kept up friendly cor-

<sup>1</sup>One and a half months earlier the National Association was founded. Its object was to "assert our legal rights by legitimate means" and "to apply for any amendment or reform, as the case may be, either to the Local Government or to the authorities in England". Another of its purposes was to adopt measures for the welfare of the country. (See, *Sahitya Sadhak Charitmalā*, No. 45, *Devendranath Thakur* by Jogesh Chandra Bagal, pp. 57-60). We have not found the National Association mentioned in any other book.

respondence with the Associations of the sister Presidencies, at intervals, as opportunities occurred”.

In 1852 the Association submitted a petition to the Government which included among other prayers, the allowing of a sufficient interval between the publication of draft Bills and their enactment with the object of eliciting public opinion and the remodelling of the municipal commission. Petitions were also submitted stating various grievances, praying for redresses, and suggesting remedies, for reduced postage for newspapers, against the hardship of the salt law etc. At the time of the renewal of the Charter in 1853, the Association asked for the limiting of the period of the Charter to ten years, the separation of the Legislature from the Executive, and the inclusion of some Indian members in the Legislature etc. Some of the prayers were conceded, but the last one remained unfulfilled. The Association viewed this demand seriously and noted that “every legitimate means should be adopted to ensure the removal of this great defect from the new enactment, as well as to secure the advantage of having the business of legislation conducted with open doors”.

In the subsequent years the Association continued its efforts for the inclusion of Indians in the Legislative Council. Besides that it also suggested the holding of the Civil Service Examination in India, urged the acceptance of the principle of equality of all before the eyes of the law, and pleaded for increased Government aid to education etc. In 1856-57 another attempt was made to bring the British-born subjects under the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts and once again it failed. The members of the Association supported the move and a meeting was held in the Town Hall on the Black Bills, which was addressed by George Thompson, Ramgopal Ghose, Digambar Mitra, Kisorichand Mitra and others. The controversy continued, and in 1861 the privileges of the European subjects were abolished, though they still could not be tried by Indian officers. This disparity caused much hatred and bitterness until the issue reached its climax in the Ilbert Bill controversy (1883).

Among those to whom the British Indian Association owed its success were Prasanna Kumar Tagore,

Devendranath Tagore, Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitra, Kisorichand Mitra and Harishchandra Mukherjee, the editor of the *Hindu Patriot*. The Association generally proceeded on the lines of constitutional agitation laid down by Raja Rammohun. The activities heralded the beginning of the political aspirations of the Indians. Its power was widely felt and the people had the feeling that through the Association they could express their views and press for their demands. The contempt for the 'Native' began to disappear and the Association fulfilled much of what was expected of it. It represented not only the interest of the landed aristocracy but also those of the peasants. A survey of its work convincingly refutes the observation that the Association had no constructive policy and hardly had "any programme of systematic action for the political advancement of the country". Indeed, the British Indian Association's contribution to political progress was very significant.

#### **The Mutiny of 1857 and the Bengali middle-class :**

The attitude of the politically conscious educated Bengalis to the historic rising of 1857 has recently become a subject of much discussion and research. The very nature and character of the Indian Mutiny has evoked great controversy and it has variously been viewed as the 'First War of Independence', as a 'feudal revolt' and a wide scale 'Sepoy Mutiny'. It is generally agreed that the rising did not receive the support or sympathy of the educated community in Bengal, where the mutineers received no help or sympathy of the local people. The Bengali middle-class were on the side of the Government, and they became alarmed and panicky at the outbreak of the violent upheaval. On 22 May, 1857, the British Indian Association passed a resolution condemning the conduct of the mutineers at Meerut and Delhi. A loyal address signed by the Maharaja of Burdwan and 2,500 men was presented after the fall of Delhi.

Most of the journals and papers unreservedly condemned the Mutiny and even the *Hindu Patriot* disowned the outbreak and supported the wise policy of Lord Canning. Harishchandra Mukherjee, the editor of the *Hindu Patriot* wrote in 1859 in the pen name *Hindu* : "It was the general

good will of the population which rendered the suppression of the Military Mutiny both practicable and beneficial". Iswarchandra Gupta and his paper *Sambad Prabhakar* ridiculed and condemned the revolt unreservedly. There were only a few isolated cases of Bengali support for the Mutiny of 1857. One such is a letter alleged to be written by Kalinarayan Chaudhury and Moghul Agha Ghulam Ali, two notable citizens of Dacca, in which they claimed to have financed the mutineers. The Lieutenant Governor, however, rejected the allegation as a fabrication by interested persons. In Assam, one Maniram Datta was hanged and another Madhu Mallik was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on the charge of having had treasonable contact with the sepoys. But it is argued that the evidence against them was insufficient and Maniram was on bad terms with the Deputy Commissioner of Jorhat, who acted both as the prosecutor and judge. The absence of any evidence of support or sympathy for the Mutiny in contemporary Bengali papers and journals has been ascribed to the gagging Press Act No. 15 of June, 1857. The bilingual daily *Samachar Sudhabarsan* (published in Bengali and Hindi) edited by Shyamsundar Sen in its issue dated 26 May, 1857, showed its sympathy for the mutineers, and for this the editor of the paper was tried. The editor of the Persian journal *Durbin* was also tried for publishing a manifesto of the mutineers. The editor of *Durbin* apologized and was released, while Shyamsundar Sen was tried in the Supreme Court but was acquitted because the Press Act had not been passed at the time of its writing. A Lithographic Press was also confiscated by the Government.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars attribute the rapid growth of political consciousness and the spread of the national movement to the Mutiny of 1857. But that is an over-assessment of the effects of the Mutiny, though its effect on the minds of the Bengali nationalists in one way or another cannot be denied. Harishchandra Mukherjee raised the question of self-determination at the time of the transfer of India from the Company to the Crown. He wrote: "Can a revolution in the Indian Government be authorised by Parliament without consulting

<sup>1</sup>See, *Desh*, 25th year, No. 13, (25 January, 1958)—article by Chittaranjan Bandopadhyay, pp. 902-908.



the wishes of the vast millions of men for whose benefit it is proposed to be made ? The reply must be in the negative. ... The time is nearly come when all Indian questions must be solved by Indians. The mutinies have made patent to the English public what must be the effects of politics in which the Native is allowed no voice". The aversion of the educated Bengalis to violent upheavals against the British rule is easily understood. The national movement was progressing along constitutional lines and independence of British rule was still far from the programme or the imagination of the political leaders. The redress of grievances, the securing of more rights and privileges, a share in the administration and the general welfare of the people were all that was aimed at.

### **The Indigo Agitation :**

Almost in the wake of the rising of 1857 took place the famous Indigo agitation which immensely helped the growth of nationalism in Bengal and provided an inspiring example of co-operation between the poor peasants and educated middle-class people against a grievous wrong and heinous exploitation by the indigo planters. The industry was transported into India from the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century by European planters. Louis Bonnard was perhaps the first indigo planter in India (1777). The first man to introduce this profitable industry into Bengal was Carel Blume, a British merchant (1778). It was one of the main sources of the income of the East India Company and one of the main items of export. The Company later left the industry in the hands of the European planters. With the growth of the textile industry the indigo trade flourished. The planters used to sell it to British monopolists and made a huge profit. Even in the early years of the nineteenth century the cultivation of indigo was expected to help the improvement of the condition of the peasants. But the hopes never materialized and the situation began to change rapidly. The price of indigo fell in the European market and the indigo planters found it difficult to make a profit after paying reasonable wages to the indigo cultivators. So their extortion, coercion and tyranny increased.

The inhuman sufferings of the cultivators reached their height in the middle of the nineteenth century. "Murder, homicide, riot, arson, dacoity, plunder and kidnapping" were some of the means by which they were forced to take up indigo cultivation. They were persuaded and forced to take advances which put them under compulsion to cultivate indigo. Mr. J. Cockburn, himself once an indigo planter, admitted that a *ryot's* receipts from growing indigo were less than what he earned by growing rice on the same field. There was no legal or other protection for the poor suffering peasants. The planters were intimately connected with the officials and in most cases they themselves were the Magistrates. Mr. Cockburn frankly stated, "Those planters who have zamindary, &c. will laugh at any law (of tenant protection) that may aim at a reform of the present system. . . (because) the law can never be brought to bear upon them, for this simple reason that no ryot of their will dare to put himself under its protection, while his *jama* and, in fact, all he possesses in this world, were in the hands of the planters". The *lathials* or armed retainers of the planters often forcibly seized crops and helped unauthorised cultivation of lands. Incidents of villages being burnt and lives taken in cold blood became regular occurrences. Such inhuman torture and sufferings could not be tolerated for ever and ultimately a mass upsurge against the planters took place and continued from 1858-1860. The agitation was particularly widespread in Jessore, Nadia, Pabna, Faridpur etc. The contributing causes of this outbreak, according to the Lieutenant Governor J. P. Grant, were the alarming increase in the prices of agricultural products and a consequent increase in the cost of indigo cultivation which the planters refused to pay. Rev. Long, who made a detailed study of the crisis and was sympathetic to the agitators, attributed the outbreak to the rise in prices, the rise in the cost of labour, the influence of contemporary political events like the Mutiny and middle-class support for the indigo cultivators. The peasants refused to produce indigo and gave vent to their longstanding hatred for the planters by armed mass attacks on *Nilkatis* (houses of the planters), Government offices, local courts etc. It was a spontaneous mass movement.

Among the peasant leaders were Larmur Saheb, Rafiq Mandal of Maldah, Bisnucharan Biswas and Digambar Biswas—the two Biswas brothers of Nadia.

The Indigo agitation was supported by the middle-class Bengali intellectuals, foremost among them being Harishchandra Mukherjee, the editor of the *Hindu Patriot* and Sisirkumar Ghose. The *Hindu Patriot* took up the cause of the cultivators and many other Bengali mofussil papers also supported the agitation. In the columns of the *Hindu Patriot*, Harishchandra started a crusade against the indigo planters and besides that devoted all his time, energy and money to the cause of the suffering indigo cultivators. On 19 May, 1860, he wrote in the *Hindu Patriot*, "Bengal might well be proud of its peasantry. In no other country in the world is to be found in the tillers of the soil the virtues which the ryots of Bengal have so prominently displayed ever since the Indigo agitation had begun. Wanting power, wealth, political knowledge and even leadership, the peasantry of Bengal have brought about a revolution inferior in magnitude and importance to none that has happened in the social history of any other country". It was mainly owing to his initiative that the Indigo Commission was set up by the Government in 1860. Sisirkumar Ghose also supported the peasants. He wrote several letters in the *Hindu Patriot* giving a vivid picture of the miserable condition of the ryots in Jessore. Manomohan Ghose also wrote in favour of the indigo cultivators. The support for the agitation and hatred for the planters found expression in contemporary novels, dramas, songs, folk-lore etc. The most important and historic of these was Dinabandhu Mitra's drama *Neel Darpan* which gave a living picture of the merciless tyranny of the planters which moved one and all and evoked universal hatred against them. As Dinabandhu was in Government service, the book was published anonymously and it stirred the entire country. The book was translated into English by Michael Madhusudan Datta, but as he also was in Government service, the translation was published in the name of Rev. Long. The indigo planters brought a suit against Rev. Long. The latter was tried by a Magistrate friendly towards the planters and Rev. Long was sentenced to one month's imprisonment.

and a fine of Rs. 1,000/-. The fine was paid in the court by Kaliprosanna Sinha, a well-known citizen of Calcutta. "Harish and Long" became household names in the country and the untimely demise of Harishchandra (1860) and the imprisonment of Long were much regretted by the whole country.

The Indigo agitation was a mass upheaval unprecedented in the history of the country. Even in 1862 when the Lieutenant Governor J. P. Grant was returning from Dacca by a steamer along the Jamuna river, "the banks of the river, for a distance of 70 or 80 miles, were lined by thousands of people who were running along to keep up with the steamer, the women sitting by the water's edge, the inhabitants of the different villages pouring out and taking up the race from village to village, all the time vociferously beseeching him to grant them justice". The Lieutenant Governor was struck by the magnitude and organization of the demonstration and commented, "The organization and capacity for continued and simultaneous action in the cause, which this remarkable demonstration over so large an extent of country proved, are subjects worthy of much consideration". The Indigo agitation had indeed shaken the whole country and it is not surprising that Lord Canning admitted that it had caused him more anxiety than he had felt since the fall of Delhi.

The Indigo Commission that was set up in 1860 consisted of Government officers, planters' representatives, and a representative from the British Indian Association. The Report of the Commission condemned the indigo cultivation system and considerable relief was given to the peasants. Later, with the invention and increased use of synthetic dyes, the indigo industry practically came to an end. The Indigo agitation was a great triumph of the peasants, who received the whole-hearted support and sympathy of the Bengali middle-class people. To this should be added the sympathetic attitude of some of the officers of the British Civil Service such as Sir Louis Jackson, Ashley Eden and others. The effect of the agitation on the political development in Bengal was very significant and it can best be summed up in the words of Sisirkumar Ghose, one of the active participants of the movement. He wrote (in 1874),

“It was the indigo disturbance which first taught the natives the value of combination and political agitation. Indeed, it was the first revolution in Bengal after the advent of the English. If there be a second revolution it will be to free the nation from the death grips of the all-powerful police and District Magistrates. Nothing like oppression ! It was the oppression which brought about the glorious revolution in England and it was the oppression of half a century by indigo planters which at last roused the half-dead Bengalee and infused spark in his cold frame”.

### **Nationalism in Bengal (1857—1885) :**

The post-Mutiny period saw the remarkable and rapid growth of political consciousness, the assertion of national sentiment and the beginning of sustained political agitation in Bengal. This heartening development and progress can be attributed to several correlated factors. One such important factor was the spread of English education. Every year a large number of bright young men graduated from the University of Calcutta and they naturally aspired for political power and self-government. The most brilliant among them were in the forefront of the renaissance in Bengal ; many among them carried their ideas to other parts of India, and their constructive genius was utilised there. Many of these educated youths found it difficult to get suitable employment. Their failure in getting into the Indian Civil Service was also a factor. Even those Indians who succeeded in getting appointments to high Government posts suffered from a sense of inferiority and subordination to the English officers, who in many cases were much inferior in qualifications and efficiency to their subordinate Indian officers. The beginning of researches into ancient Indian history, culture and civilization and the revealing works on Indology of Cunningham, Prinsep, Max Muller, Rajendralal Mitra and others threw new light on the ancient glory of India and this imparted a spirit of self-confidence to the educated Bengalis. Moreover, during this period a strong reaction against the tide of Westernization was encouraged by men who themselves had received Western education and studied Western culture. Among these men were Devendra-

nath Tagore, Bhudeb Mukherjee and Rajnarayan Bose. The growth and development of modern means of communications such as railways, high-roads, steamboats and the telegraph, and the construction of bridges and canals helped the rapid spread of the nationalist movement and the spirit of unity among the Indians. Contemporary European political movements of historic importance also had their repercussions, particularly on the young educated Bengalis. The unification of Italy and Germany, the struggle of the Roumanians and Serbians, the reform movements in England caught their imagination and stirred their mind. Besides these factors, the newspapers and journals made a great contribution to the spread of the spirit of nationalism. Among these, the most influential were the *Sambad Prabhakar* of Iswarchandra Gupta, *Hindu Intelligentsia* of Kasiprosad Ghose, the *Hindu Patriot* of Harishchandra Mukherjee and Girishchandra Ghose, the *Bengalee* of Girishchandra Ghose and the *Somprokash* of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan. Contemporary Bengali literature also immensely contributed to the growth of nationalism.

The pioneer of nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century was Rajnarayan Bose who is affectionately called the "Grandfather of Indian nationalism." Himself a conservative Brahmo, Rajnarayan extolled the glory and virtue of Indian history, culture and heritage. The current of Western culture and civilization was at that time practically sweeping away most of the educated Bengalis and Rajnarayan devoted himself to the cause of upholding Hindu cultural heritage and turning the tide of Westernization. In 1866 he founded the Society for the Promotion of National Feeling (*Jatio Gaurab Sampadani Sabha*) at Midnapore. A prospectus for a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal was issued by him in the same year. The object of the Society was to revive the national gymnastic exercises, establish a Model School of Instruction in Hindi Music, establish a school of Hindu Medicine, publish in Bengali the results of the researches of the Sanskrit scholars of Europe in Indian history, culture, civilization etc., encourage the cultivation of Sanskrit, to make it binding upon its members to ground the know-

ledge of their sons in their mother tongue before giving them an English education, to prevent the corruption of the colloquial language (i.e. mixing English words with Bengali), to make it obligatory for the members to correspond with each other in Bengali, and to take steps for furthering the cause of the Bengali language, aiding social reforms by raising national feeling in their favour. The main object "would be to promote and foster national feelings which would lead to the formation of a national character and thereby to the eventual promotion of the prosperity of the nation". Justice Sambhunath Pandit agreed to become the President of such a Society.<sup>1</sup>

In 1865 Rajnarayan Bose, Jyotirindranath Tagore and Nabagopal Mitra had founded the Patriots' Association. In the same year the *National Paper* was started by Nabagopal Mitra and Rajnarayan's Prospectus was published in this paper. It was Nabagopal who made the word "National" popular among the educated people of Bengal. He founded a National Society, a National Paper, a National School, a National Gymnasium. For these he became known as 'National Nabagopal'. He was a Brahmo, closely connected with the Tagore family. The *National Paper* was full of incorrect English. It was also a sign of his nationalism—his indifference to learn a foreign language." He was inspired by the Prospectus of Rajnarayan Bose to establish the *Jatiya Mela*, later renamed and more well-known as *Hindu Mela*, in 1867.

The *Hindu Mela* used to hold annual sessions which continued up to 1880. The main object of the *Mela* was to foster the spirit of self-help which was considered essential to national progress and welfare. Ganendranath Tagore was the Secretary and Nabagopal was the Assistant Secretary of the *Mela*. The *Mela* worked for national progress, the development of national literature, national songs, national gymnastics, physical culture, exhibition of various products of Indian arts and crafts and encouraged Indian producers. One of the main objects of its foundation was to help the

<sup>1</sup>J. C. Bagal, *Jatiatar Nabamantra*, pp. 102-112.

<sup>2</sup>Bipinchandra Pal, *Nabayuger Bangla*, pp. 149-150.

building up of Indian economy. Its annual fairs or sessions were attended by thousands of people and caused great public enthusiasm.

The second annual session of the *Mela* was held in 1868 under the Presidency of Pandit Bhabasankar Vidyaratna. Satyendranath Tagore, the first Indian I.C.S. (1863), a son of Devendranath Tagore, composed a patriotic song for the occasion. Other patriotic songs were sung and a special feature was the oration of Manomohan Bose. All the subsequent sessions were great successes and the exhibitions of Indian arts and crafts were of special significance. After the death of Ganendranath in 1869 Dwijendranath Tagore became the Secretary of the *Mela*. The latter's liking for exhibitions of national paintings was criticised by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Sisirkumar Ghose, which urged the need of laying emphasis on physical culture.

In 1870 the National Society (*Jatio Sabha*) was founded. The *Mela* was an annual fair, so the need for a permanent organization to spread and popularise the objects of the *Mela* throughout the year was keenly felt. The Hindu exclusiveness of the Society was criticised in some quarters. In reply to the criticism the *National Paper* wrote: "We do not understand why our correspondent takes exception to the Hindoos who certainly form a nation by themselves, and as such a society established by them can very properly be called a National Society." In fact the "Hindu tone" of the national movement of the period needs a little explanation. A broader basis would definitely have been more desirable but the Hindu emphasis was inevitable. To Rajnarayan, Nabagopal and others, nationalism meant unity and the basis of national unity in India, they believed, had been the Hindu religion. This view was quite in accordance with the age. As Bipin Chandra Pal observed, like the English, the Moslems and the Christians were considered as foreigners. The Moslem national consciousness had not yet developed and they were not yet taking part in the growth of Indian nationalism. The main cause of their backwardness was their disinclination to take English education. And it is no exaggeration to say that English education had been the



single major factor in the growth of national consciousness in India.

There were only a very few enlightened Moslems in Calcutta. The National Mohammedan Association under the leadership of Nawab Abdul Latif was the only Moslem organization worth its name. This was, however, an organization of aristocratic Moslems and there was hardly any glimmering of national consciousness among the Moslems in general. It was not until 1874 that the Aligarh University was founded for the Moslems by Syed Ahmad, and was a great step forward in the Moslem awakening in the country. But the national movement continued to be led by the Hindus for quite some time to come.

The annual sessions of the *Hindu Mela* succeeded in instilling a great fervour of nationalism among the people. Its influence on Bengali literature, as we shall see later, was very great. The spirit of national progress awakened by the *Mela* never died. It drew into the national movement men like Sisirkumar Ghose, Jyotirindranath Tagore, Manomohan Bose, Sibnath Sastri, Bipin Chandra Pal and many others. It indeed occupies a unique position in the history of Indian nationalism. In spite of its Hindu emphasis the *Mela* had an all-India outlook and in that sense may be regarded as the precursor of the Indian Association (1876). It fostered the spirit of self-help among the people, which went a long way in giving a sound foundation to the national movement. The *Mela's* emphasis on Indian arts and crafts and Indian products was a very wise and farsighted policy and its industrial exhibitions were the forerunners of the famous Industrial Exhibition organized by the Indian National Congress in 1896. The *Mela* became the source of inspiration to many and even Rabindranath Tagore, then a mere stripling, was connected with its later sessions. Writing on this phase of nationalism, Rabindranath observed, "It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of impatience at the humiliation constantly heaped upon us by people who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of sharply dividing the human world into the good and the bad according to the hemisphere to which

they belong. This contemptuous spirit of separatedness was perpetually hurting us and causing great damage to our own world of culture. . . . The national movement was started to proclaim that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one, because it set out with a great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings".

In the seventies of the nineteenth century the national consciousness was tending to become more broad based and wider in outlook. This happy change was largely effected by the newspapers and journals which carried out political discussions and reviewed and analysed various problems and issues from different angles. In 1875 the total number of native papers was 474. The whole approach was becoming more political than emotional. Among the papers which contributed much to this transformation was the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* founded by Sisirkumar Ghose in 1868. The object of the paper was to carry on sustained political agitation in defence of Indian rights. Sisirkumar had already earned a name during the Indigo agitation and a few years later he became the leader of a wide circle of young educated Indians. Even Bal Gangadhar Tilak called Sisirkumar his political *guru* (teacher). The latter was a severe and relentless critic of the Government. He viewed the Government policies and activities with great suspicion and it is indeed remarkable that he was even at this time aware of the danger of the Moslem claim for special privileges. He wrote in his paper on 26 October, 1882 : "Those Mussalmans who are for special privileges must not forget the interests of India. India first and then other considerations. The spectacle of Hindus and Mussalmans quarrelling over the texts of the Puran or the Koran is not at all a serious affair. . . . But it is altogether a serious affair, when the unthinking Mussalmans cry for special privileges the effect of which can do no good to themselves, but would be very weakening to the country". He is regarded as the first exponent of the extremist school of Indian politicians. With the growth of the unemployment problem and worsening economic conditions the extremist school became popular. Sisirkumar gave expression to the public discontent and indignation at the

slow rate of political progress in the country. Once he was told by a Judge of the Calcutta High Court that his writings were marked by "virulence which may afterwards come to influence the masses and spread discontent and disaffection in the country". To this Sisirkumar replied that the *Patrika's* object was to make the people aware of their miserable condition and infuse in them the spirit of patriotism. Then he added, "They are now more dead than alive and need to be roused from their slumber. Our language has, therefore, to be loud and penetrating".<sup>1</sup> Though an exponent of the extremist school, he was against the use of violence and urged the people to make constitutional agitation for their rights. He laid stress on organized public opinion and as early as in 1870 voiced the demand for a Parliament for India. He demanded popular representation in the Calcutta Corporation. He suggested a more democratic constitution for the British Indian Association.

Sisirkumar had a bold scheme of a popular political organization in India and along with Sambhuchandra Mukherjee founded the Indian League in 1875. The organization included Durgamohan Das, Anandamohan Bose, Narendranath Sen, Nabagopal Mitra, Surendranath Banerjee and other nationalists. But the Indian League did not last long owing to differences of opinion among the members. Soon afterwards the leadership of the national movement was assumed by a new leader—Surendranath Banerjee.

Young Surendranath Banerjee went to England along with Rameschandra Datta and Biharilal Gupta. He passed the Civil Service Examination in 1869 but was disqualified for an alleged discrepancy in his age. This evoked a universal outburst of indignation throughout India, specially in Bengal, and ultimately he was reinstated. On his return to Calcutta in 1871 he was posted as Assistant Magistrate in Sylhet. There Surendranath led a completely Anglicised life. Soon trouble arose between the District Magistrate, Mr. Sutherland, and Surendranath, and consequently the latter was discharged from the Civil Service on trivial grounds. The real cause of his dismissal was that the English officials still did

<sup>1</sup> J. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism*, p. 73.

not like to have Indians within their close preserve. The dismissal of Surendranath hurt the feelings of the Indians and was a rude shock to the aspirations of Indians to have a share in the administration of the country. Surendranath was determined to fight to the last and again went to England to appeal to the India Office. The efforts proving abortive he intended to join the Bar but found the doors closed there as well. He returned to India in 1875, a disillusioned and disappointed young man. The dismissal of Surendranath from the Civil Service, as astutely remarked by Bipin Chandra Pal, was a blessing in disguise for the national movement. Surendranath in his famous book *A Nation in Making* writes, "I felt that I had suffered because I was an Indian, a member of a community that lay disorganised, had no public opinion, and no voice in the counsels of their Government. I felt with all the passionate warmth of youth that we were helots, hewers of wood and drawers of water in the land of our birth. The personal wrong done to me was an illustration of the helpless impotency of our people. In the midst of impending ruin and dark, frowning misfortune, I formed the determination of addressing myself to the task of helping our helpless people in this direction of redressing our wrongs and protecting our rights, both as individuals and as a nation". It was this determination and tenacity that later earned for him the sobriquet of "Surrender Not" and made him the "Uncrowned King" of Bengal and an unquestioned all-India leader.

In June 1875, Surendranath addressed a public meeting organized by the Temperance Society. This was practically his first public speech and his superb oratory at once distinguished him as a public speaker. That year he was appointed by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar as Professor of English in the Metropolitan College. This was the beginning of a new life for him and he remained active in the work of teaching from 1875 to 1912.<sup>1</sup> As a teacher Surendranath infused in

<sup>1</sup> In 1879 he also joined the City College. In 1880 he left the Metropolitan College and joined the Free Church College and served that institution upto 1885. In 1882 he had taken charge of a school known as the Presidency Institution. Under his management it later developed into Ripon College which after 1947 has been renamed Surendranath College.

his students patriotic feelings and public spirit. He delivered a number of lectures on subjects such as the *Study of History, the Life of Mazzini, the Life of Chaitanya, and Indian Unity*, which kept his listeners spellbound.

In 1875 he had joined the Students' Association organized by Anandamohan Bose, the first Indian wrangler of Cambridge. Some of his lectures were arranged by the Students' Association and his first lecture *On the Rise of the Sikh Power in the Punjab* created an unprecedented enthusiasm among the students. He considered that his political and his educational work were interlinked and he always emphasised the need of creating among the Indian students "a genuine sober and rational interest in public affairs". This was the underlying idea that prompted him to join the Students' Association. It was the practical politics and oratory of Surendranath and the idealism of Anandamohan Bose that combined to make the Students' Association a great success and contributed immensely to the growth of nationalism.

The Indian League having failed, the need of a strong, well-organized and broad-based political association was keenly felt. Meanwhile the British Indian Association under the Secretaryship of Kristodas Pal was still serving a useful purpose. But it was generally considered as an association of the aristocrats and it was not in keeping with the political advancement made during these years. So in 1876 the Indian Association was founded by Surendranath Banerjee, Anandamohan Bose, Sibnath Sastri, Dwarakanath Ganguly and others. It was the beginning of a new era in the history of the national movement. Rev. Krishnamohun Banerjee was the first President of the Association. Anandamohan Bose was elected the Secretary and Akshoykumar Sarkar the Assistant Secretary. The name itself was significant as it implied that the national movement was developing a far wider outlook and approach and was assuming an all-India character.

The Association had a number of objects which were :

- (a) The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country.

- (b) The unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations.
- (c) The promotion of friendly feeling between the Hindus and the Moslems.
- (d) The inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day.

The Association started its work in right earnest. Branches were opened in different districts and it worked in co-operation with organizations in other provinces. Its first work was the beginning of a national campaign in 1877 against the reduction of the maximum limit of age from 21 to 19 for the Open Competitive Examination for the Indian Civil Service. A protest meeting was held in the Town Hall and was followed by similar meetings in different parts of India. The principal object of the agitation was "the awakening of a spirit of unity and solidarity among the people of India". As a Special Delegate, Surendranath toured different provinces in 1877-78. Everywhere he kindled a new spirit of nationalism and the object of building up a national and unifying movement was largely fulfilled. An All-India Memorial on the Civil Service question was addressed to the House of Commons, and Lalmohan Ghose was chosen to represent the Indian Association in England (1879-1880). The deputation met with little success but Lalmohan presented the Indian case admirably and made a lasting impression on the English public. He was sent to England for a second time and so strong was his popularity in England that he stood for election to the Parliament as a Liberal candidate. Though not returned, he polled a large number of votes, which was a great fillip to the national movement.

The economic condition of the country had been deteriorating and increasing Indian poverty became alarming. Famines occurred almost regularly and the Government did little to mitigate the people's suffering. Rameshchandra Datta wrote: "Amidst signs of progress and prosperity from all parts of the Empire, India alone presented a scene of poverty and distress... The Indian Empire will be judged

by History as the most superb of human institutions in modern times. But it would be a sad story for future historians to tell that the Empire gave the people of India peace but not prosperity; that the manufacturers lost their industries; that the cultivators were ground down by a heavy and variable taxation which precluded any saving; that the revenues of the country were to a large extent diverted to England; and that recurring and desolating famines swept away millions of the population".<sup>1</sup>

The reactionary Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton provoked countrywide discontent and indignation and the repressive Arms Act (1878), the Vernacular Press Act (1878), and the diversion of the famine fund to the Afghan War added fuel to the fire of nationalism, particularly in Bengal. As William Wedderburn wrote, "The state of things at the end of Lord Lytton's reign was bordering upon a revolution". The Indian Association courageously carried out a popular agitation against the administration. The leaders of the Association succeeded in drawing into the national movement thousands of men, and *ryots'* unions were formed to campaign for the rights of the peasants. With the formation of the Liberal Ministry of Gladstone and the coming of Lord Ripon in 1880 the period of repression ended. But the administration of Lord Lytton had served a very useful purpose. In the words of Surendranath, "The reactionary administration of Lord Lytton had roused the public from its attitude of indifference and had given a stimulus to public life. In the evolution of political progress, bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise. They help to stir a community into life, a result that years of agitation would perhaps have failed to achieve".

Lord Ripon was a Liberal in every sense of the term. He repealed the gagging Press Act, introduced the Local Self-Government Act, appointed the Hunter Commission to review the progress of education and suggest ways for its im-

<sup>1</sup> In recent years some valuable research has been published on the economic history of India. Some scholars have rejected the theory that there was an economic decline in the second half of the nineteenth century and have produced good evidence in support of their contention. But even then the fact remains that one of the causes of public discontent during this period was poverty and the poor economic condition of the people.

provement, introduced the Factory Act for the welfare of the workers and envisaged a Tenancy Bill. While the liberal administration of Lord Ripon was raising new hopes in the minds of the nationalists, two events gave a new impetus to the national movement and made it more dynamic and widespread than ever before. These two historic events were the Ilbert Bill controversy (1882) and the Contempt Case of Surendranath (1883).

The Ilbert Bill (1882) sought to abolish the privilege enjoyed by the British-born subjects and bring them under the jurisdiction of Indian Magistrates. This was actually the climax of the drama that had started since the Black Acts controversy of 1849. As in the past, it raised a hue and cry in the European community, and, led by Mr. Branson, a Barrister, they started a campaign against the Bill with all their might. Indian public opinion, which by now was quite formidable, organized a counter-campaign. Lalmohan Ghose gave a spirited reply to a provocative speech attacking Indian culture and character given by Branson in Dacca. But ultimately even Lord Ripon could not have it his own way, and had to concede to pressure from home and abroad, and the jurisdiction of only the District Magistrates and the Session Judges was acknowledged in principle. This was another humiliating defeat for the Indians, who lost their battle for equality. One solace was the boycott of Branson by Bengali solicitors that led to his departure for England. The failure of the agitation provided much food for thought to the nationalists who now felt the need of a broader line of action.

Along with the Ilbert Bill agitation the Contempt Case of Surendranath Banerjee (May, 1883) caused unprecenented public agitation. Surendranath was sentenced to two months' imprisonment for contempt of court in a passage published in his paper the *Bengalee*. In its issue dated 2 April, 1883, Surendranath outspokenly condemned Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court for "the bringing of a Saligram, a stone idol, into court of identification." Surendranath, though himself a Brahmo, took serious exception to such a practice and commented, "what are we to think of a judge who is so ignorant of the feelings of the people and so disrespectful of their most cherished convictions, as to drag into Court, and"



then to inspect, an object of worship...?" He bluntly remarked that such a person was unfit to be a Judge of the High Court.

The sentence of imprisonment on Surendranath touched off a public agitation, the tempo of which had been mounting for some time. The magnitude and spontaneity of the agitation are best realized from Surendranath's own account. "The news of my imprisonment created a profound impression not only in Calcutta, and in my own province, but throughout India. In Calcutta, on the day of imprisonment, the Indian shops were closed and business was suspended in the Indian part of the town, not by order, or by an organised effort but under a spontaneous impulse which moved the whole community. The students went into mourning. The demonstrations held in Calcutta were so large that no hall could find space for the crowds that sought admittance; the bazars were utilised for the purpose. Then was first started the practice of holding open-air meetings, and these were demonstrations not confined to the upper ten thousand of the educated classes; the masses joined them in their thousands..." Commenting on the state of public feeling, Surendranath writes, "In the whole course of my public life, I have never witnessed except in connection with the agitation for the modification of the partition of Bengal, an upheaval of feeling so genuine and so wide-spread as that what swept through Bengal in 1883"<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars regard the later observation of Surendranath as an exaggeration and criticise him for minimising the significance of the Ilbert Bill controversy.<sup>2</sup> But the criticism seems unjustified, as Surendranath apparently makes his observation on the "upheaval of feeling" in 1883 and in the same place he states: "The Ilbert Bill controversy... had roused them to a fever-heat of excitement." Moreover, the great significance given to the Ilbert Bill agitation by Surendranath is clearly evident when he writes that "it strengthened the forces that were speeding up the birth of the Congress movement" and regards the summoning of the

<sup>1</sup> A Nation in Making, pp. 78-79.

<sup>2</sup> Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Growth of Nationalism in India*,

National Conference as "the reply of educated India to the Ilbert Bill agitation".

The mass upheaval of 1883 had taught the nationalists the need for a greater and wider political movement in India, and to give a practical shape to this idea the Indian Association called an All-India National Conference in Calcutta, which was held in December 1883. It had been preceded by the starting of a National Fund to furnish the sinews of a political struggle. It originated from an idea of Tarapada Banerjee of Krishnagar and within a short time a large amount of money was collected for the purpose. Ramtanu Lahiri presided over the first All-India National Conference. It was attended by representatives from other Indian provinces and the Conference discussed and passed resolutions on technical education, the conventioned Civil Service, the Arms Act, representative government etc. Wilfrid Blunt, the only European to be present in the Conference, wrote that it was "a really important occasion" and "as, Bose (A.M.) in his opening speech remarked, it was the first stage towards a National Parliament."<sup>1</sup>

Surendranath undertook another tour of upper India in 1884, which further helped to establish closer contact between the nationalists and develop the spirit of unity. The second conference was also held in Calcutta in December 1885, at the same time as the first session of the Indian National Congress was being held in Bombay.

### **Nationalism from 1885 to 1905 :**

Years of sincere efforts and organized campaigns by the *Hindu Mela* and the Indian Association had prepared the ground for an all-India organization, and the first National Conference of 1883 was a decisive step forward in that direction. The second conference, held in 1885, was even more important as it was convened jointly by the British Indian Association, the Indian Association and the National Moham-medan Association and attended by representatives from various towns and villages of Bengal and also delegates from

<sup>1</sup> W. S. Blunt, *India Under Ripon*, p. 7, A. M. Bose is Anandamohan Bose.

other Indian provinces. But the move for the foundation of the Indian National Congress came from Bombay, where also national consciousness had made great progress. The idea was conceived and the initiative was taken by Allan Octavian Hume, a retired Civil Servant with liberal ideas and keen on Indian progress.

In 1883 Hume addressed an open letter to the educated Indians urging them to devote themselves earnestly and unselfishly to the cause of the progress of the country and to securing greater freedom for the Indians. He then formed the Indian National Union with branches in the big cities. In 1884 Lord Ripon retired, and he was accorded a spontaneous and hearty farewell by the Indians, which made an impression on all including the high officials. The next Viceroy Lord Dufferin was in the beginning sympathetic to Indian aspirations. In 1885 Hume met Dufferin and placed before him a proposal that every year leading Indian politicians should meet and discuss social matters and establish close contact among themselves. He did not desire that they should discuss political questions, as that was the task of the existing political bodies in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. He further suggested that the Governor of the province where the meetings was to take place should preside over it, as this would bring about cordial relations between officials and non-official Indian political leaders. Lord Dufferin showed great interest in Hume's plan but expressed the view that the proposed body should discuss political questions also, since otherwise it would be of little use. He further suggested that a Governor should not preside over the meeting, as that would stand in the way of free discussion. Dufferin expected the body to perform "the functions which Her Majestys' Opposition did in England". Hume was convinced by the arguments of the Viceroy and he placed his plan before leading politicians in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other places, who accepted it and proceeded to give effect to it.

Thus the scheme of the Congress as a political body came from Lord Dufferin who "had made it a condition with Mr. Hume that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained

in the country, and this condition was faithfully maintained and none but the men consulted by Mr. Hume knew anything about the matter."<sup>1</sup> But it was Hume who took all the trouble and made necessary contacts and arrangements for giving shape to the scheme. The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay, in December 1885, under the Presidency of W. C. Bonnerjee, an eminent Bengali lawyer. Besides the latter, there were only two other representatives from Bengal to the Congress—Narendranath Sen, editor of the *Indian Mirror*, and Girijabhusan Mukherjee, editor of the *Naba Bibhakar*. Surendranath and other well-known political leaders did not attend the Congress, firstly because the Second National Conference was being held in Calcutta at the same time and secondly because it is extremely doubtful whether they were really invited to the Congress. We know from Surendranath's own testimony that he was invited to the Congress but could not attend owing to the National Conference. But it does not seem that invitations were accorded to other known nationalists in Bengal.

Hume stated the following to be the objects of the Congress. Firstly, "promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in the country's cause." Secondly, the "eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices", in order to develop and consolidate the sentiments of national unity. Thirdly, to record and discuss the representative and matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing social problems. Fourthly, to formulate the lines and methods of action to be pursued by the Indian politicians for public interests during the next twelve months. The resolutions passed in the Congress were very similar to those of the first National Conference (1883) and it is significant that Surendranath, on being requested to do so, had sent the proceedings of the first National Conference to Kasi Dutt Trambak Telang of Bombay.

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Bonerjee, *Introduction to Indian Politics*; quoted in *History of Indian Journalism*, J. Natarajan, p. 98 and A. C. Mazumdar, *Indian National Evolution*, pp. 51-52.

The second session of the Indian National Congress, held in Calcutta in 1886, is of historic importance for many reasons. In this session there was the merger between the National Congress and the National Conference. The Bengal nationalists heartily co-operated and spared no effort to make the Congress session a grand success. This was a remarkable evidence of their broadness and wide outlook. They decided in favour of virtual fusion as they thought that the National Conference "had no necessity for separate existence except to the detriment of the other, or possibly of both". Dadabhai Naoroji, the respected veteran leader from Bombay, presided over the session and the great scholar Rajendralal Mitra was the President of the local Reception Committee. A great difference between the first and second session of the Congress was that while the former was a Congress of volunteers the latter was one of delegates. In a remarkable address to the Congress Rajendralal Mitra said that the people were living "under a foreign bureaucracy". He voiced the demand for peoples representation in the Legislative Councils and urged the people to think in terms of a nation and not merely as individuals. Dadabhai Naoroji asserted that the Congress should work as a political organization, with a political platform, and discuss only those matters which affected the whole country. There was of course expression of loyalty to the British Government, but the tone of criticism and the spirit of unrest were easily discernible.

It is not surprising that the Calcutta session of the Congress greatly perturbed Lord Dufferin and other British officials. The hope of the Congress emerging as "Her Majesty's Opposition" or as a "safety valve" against any possible mass upheaval in India vanished into the thin air. Lord Dufferin expressed his annoyance and anger by regarding the Congress as "big jump into the unknown" and sighting the Congressmen as "microscopic minority". The Government attitude of patronage soon changed and with the Congress rapidly assuming the form of a popular national body its attitude turned into one of hostility. The subsequent Congress sessions saw the rapid development of the Congress as a popular organization, and people from all walks of life were

coming into the Congress movement, much to the alarm of the Government.

In the development of the Congress the Bengali nationalists naturally played a very important part and in all the Congress sessions the Bengal delegates took an active part in the deliberations and sought to make the body more democratic and representative in character. All the important Congress committees had members from Bengal who were very keen and enthusiastic. They organized protests against all repressive or objectionable Government measures such as imprisonment without trial and the amendment of the Criminal Law (1897), the setting up of the University Commission by Lord Curzon (1902) with the object of bringing the Universities under stricter Government control, and the enormous Government expenditure at the Delhi Durbar (1903). The first Industrial Exhibition that was organized as an annexe to the Congress session of 1896 was mainly the work of Bengali nationalists.

In spite of the rapid progress made by the Congress as an all-India political organization, it failed to satisfy the advanced political thinking and burning nationalism of a section of Bengali nationalists. The Congress, in all its sessions, had always proclaimed its loyalty to the British Crown. Its criticism of the Government was still mild and it followed what was called a "policy of prayer and petition". Bengal had already passed this stage and the more enlightened section among the political thinkers were thinking much ahead, towards a more radical policy. As early as in 1887 Aswinikumar Datta of Barisal presented a petition for representative Government signed by 45,000 men. Dwarakanath Ganguly and Bipin Chandra Pal had taken the initiative in liberalising the Congress. In 1889, for the first time, women delegates were sent to the Congress, among whom was Kadambini Ganguly, the first lady graduate of the University of Calcutta. She made a good impression in her address to the Congress in 1890 and it was looked upon as a great step forward to the progress of Indian womanhood.

The dissatisfaction of the Bengali nationalists with the Congress was largely aggravated by the fact that the Congress, being an all-India organization, did not allow resolu-

tions on local problems. But the miserable condition and sufferings of the labourers employed in the Assam tea gardens had been drawing the sympathetic attention of the Bengali nationalists. Dwarakanath Ganguly took the initiative and on behalf of the Indian Association made an on-the-spot enquiry to collect facts. He contributed a number of heart-rending articles on his findings to the English journal *Bengalee* and Krishnakumar Mitras' Bengali journal *Sanjibani*. The condition of the workers and the method applied to force them to work were almost similar to that of indigo cultivation thirty years earlier. The question, in spite of its grave importance, could not be discussed in the Congress session and as such the need of a provincial organization that might take up this and similar issues was keenly felt. Thus was founded in 1887 the Bengal Provincial Conference, the first session of which was presided over by Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, an eminent homeopath, and the founder of the *Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science* (1876), the first institute to offer facilities for scientific research. The Provincial Conference continued to agitate on behalf of the Assam *coolies* until the Congress took up the issue in 1895 and ultimately the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Henry Cotton, took steps to improve their condition.

The Indian Association was still in existence and it was now mainly engaged in social welfare work. This and the Bengal Provincial Conference served a very useful purpose. They helped to spread political consciousness in the districts and in the rural areas. The Provincial conferences were held in the districts, the local people organized the conference, collecting money for the purpose, and the discussions were held in Bengali. All these immensely helped the growth of political consciousness and patriotism among the people. Similar organizations were founded in some other provinces.

A significant feature of the national movement in Bengal towards the end of the nineteenth century was the growth of what is known as, the New Spirit. The spirit of self-help and the emphasis on the necessity of building up Indian industries, arts and crafts were first evident in the annual sessions of the *Hindu Mela*. That trend had been developing and it reached a new stage with the Industrial Exhibition of 1896.

The Chinese boycott of foreign goods, the Boer War, the Japanese awakening, and other international movements gave an impetus to the economic endeavours of the people in which the Tagore family were in the forefront. Swadeshi Stores were opened and campaign for Swadeshi goods started.

Sarala Devi, Satishchandra Mukherjee, Jogeshchandra Chaudhury, Balendranath Tagore and Rabindranath Tagore started a *Swadeshi Bhandar* to popularize country-made goods. The new spirit found expression in other spheres of life. Not being satisfied with the existing system of education, new schools and colleges were opened by private enterprise. Emphasis was also laid on physical culture and festivals were organized with a view to develop physical education among young men. Much public work was undertaken by the people themselves and Satishchandra Mukherjee, Sister Nivedita, Jogeshchandra Chaudhury, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Rabindranath Tagore, Jatindranath Banerjee and others devoted themselves to fostering and popularizing the spirit of self-help. The Bengal Provincial Conference also worked for the diffusion of the new spirit. The poets and writers and the papers and journals gave vent to the new fervour of nationalism and the messages of Swami Vivekananda inspired the nationalists to greater and nobler work and sacrifice for the motherland. Nationalism in Bengal had reached a new stage by the end of the century.

The Indian National Congress, as we have already seen, was failing to satisfy a large section of more advanced and enlightened Bengali nationalists. The Congress policy of 'prayer and petition' to them was ineffective and had become obsolete. It was Arabin-da Ghose who raised the voice of protest against the Congress policy. He had just returned from England and had joined the State Service of Baroda. He wrote a number of articles, entitled "New Lamps for Old" in the *Induprakash* edited by K. G. Deshpande, a fellow-student of Arabin-da in Cambridge. The first article was published on 7 August, 1893. In it he stated that two years back he was an admirer of the Congress but he was now constrained to criticise it as it would not fearlessly criticise the British rule and was unable to give the country leadership. In one article he said, "A body like the Congress



which represents not the mass of the population, but a single and very limited class, could not honestly be called national. It is not a popular body and has not in any way attempted to become a popular body". In another article he wrote, "The Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption ; annually its proportions sink into greater insignificance, its leaders, the Bonnerjies and Lalmohan Ghoshes, have climbed into the rarefied atmosphere of the legislative Council and lost all hold on the imagination of the young men. The desire for a nobler and more inspiring patriotism is growing more intense". He emphasised the need of "Purification by Blood and Fire" and wrote, "In Mr. Hume's formation, the proletariat remained, for any practical purpose, a piece off the board. Yet the proletariat is, as I have striven to show, the real key of the situation. Torpid he is and immobile, he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great potential force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength becomes by the very strength the master of the future".

This sharp and straightforward criticism naturally caused much concern to the Congress high command, but at the same time it found a ready welcome in many quarters. Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab in a remarkable review pointed out the main weaknesses of the Congress and showed that it had yet failed to initiate a truly national mass movement. But the real originator of the extremist idea, as it was called, was Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra. He pleaded that on the ancient heritage was to be built up the Indian future, and that the policy of mendicancy must give way to one of assertion of Indian rights. Political agitation must spread among the masses, a spirit of self-help must be developed, and *Swaraj* or self-government must be the goal of the national movement. "Home rule is my birth right and I will have it" was the slogan that he raised, which gave a new colour to the movement. He organized the *Ganapati* and *Shivaji* festivals to awaken mass consciousness, and his imprisonment in 1896 for alleged seditious speeches had great repercussions on the whole country.

The Congress was now practically divided into two schools of thought—the Moderates and the Extremists. The

old Congress leadership, including Surendranath, was taken to belong to the former group, while the latter school developed in Maharashtra, Punjab and Bengal. In Bengal Aswinikumar Datta and Bipin Chandra Pal were the chief exponents of the extremist idea. In 1897 Aswinikumar Datta criticised the Congress session as three days' *tamasha* (fun-fair or farce). Bal Gangadhar Tilak of Maharashtra, Lala Lajpat Rai of Punjab and Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal became famous as Lal-Bal-Pal. Their main contention was that "good government is no substitute for self-government". The national movement was assuming a shape and character which was very irritating to the British rulers of India, and Bengal was the "plague-spot", so to say, to the Government. It was at this critical period that Lord Curzon arrived in India (1898) as the new Viceroy.

Lord Curzon pursued an autocratic and repressive policy which, instead of putting the expected check on the national movement, only helped it to flare-up in intensity and led to the birth of revolutionary terrorism. The Municipality Act of 1899 imposed restrictions on the power of the elected Commissioners of the Calcutta Municipality. The Universities Act of 1904 sought to bring the Universities under Government control as these were considered to be the main-spring of growing nationalism in India. A country-wide campaign against the Act was started. The Government's education policy was condemned, one of its severest critics and opponents being Mrs. Annie Besant, an illustrious name in the history of Indian nationalism. In July 1902, Satischandra Mukherjee founded the Dawn Society for patriotic young men. He had already been the founder-editor of the paper *Dawn*. Bipin Chandra Pal started the paper *New India* in 1902. All these papers contributed much to the growth of the new political trend. Extremism was gradually leading to terrorism in western India and in Bengal.

Secret societies had earlier started in Maharashtra and in Bengal and revolutionary organizations began to develop, mainly owing to the efforts of Arabinda Ghose. The pioneer and most important among these was the *Anusilan Samiti* founded in 1897. It received active help and encouragement from Swami Saradananda and Sister Nivedita. Others

connected with the growth of this revolutionary society were Jatindranath Banerjee, Barindrakumar Ghose, Pramatha Mitra, Surendranath Tagore, Sarala Devi etc. Nationalism in Bengal had reached a stage which could no longer be tolerated by a reactionary and imperialist like Lord Curzon. So he now planned to play his ace card to break the backbone of the national movement. This was a plan to partition Bengal into two separate provinces. A separatist tendency had already developed among Moslem politicians and Curzon expected to gain the support of the Moslems for his proposal of a separate province comprising the eastern districts of Bengal, where the population was predominantly Moslem, and Assam.

Moslem apathy to the national movement and the main cause of it have been discussed. Even Syed Ahmad, the first real Moslem nationalist of all-India fame, had become apprehensive of Hindu domination and favoured safeguards for the Moslems as a check to any such possibility. He had formed the Patriotic Association for the Moslems. He opposed the demand for holding the I.C.S. examinations simultaneously in India and in England as he feared that in that case the Hindus would predominate the Civil Service. Even before the foundation of the Congress the Moslem demand for special privileges and special seats in the Bengal Council had been raised. The Congress included a few nationalist Moslems and the move for special privileges was opposed. But essentially the national movement was led by Hindus and it took a long time for Moslem political consciousness to grow. Whether the national leaders were aware of this weakness of the movement and tried to take steps against the separatist feeling is a debated point. Some consider that it was inevitable, others argue that they did their best to fight this feeling and there are still others who criticise the political leaders of the time for overlooking or neglecting that danger. Be that as it may, Lord Curzon, hoping to exploit the separatist feeling of the Moslems and crush the national movement, formally announced the Partition of Bengal on 20 July, 1905, to come into force from 16 October.

This was a great challenge to the people of Bengal and the national leaders were faced with a great ordeal. The

Partition announcement unleashed a mighty national upsurge in Bengal that swept the country and ushered in a new age in the history of Indian national movement. Krishnakumar Mitra in his *Sanjibani* sounded the bugle for the nationalists by calling for a boycott of foreign goods. In the *Bangadarshan*, Rabindranath reaffirmed the unity of the people of Bengal and voiced their determination to fight the Partition. Innumerable other papers and journals stood against the scheme of Partition and the people got ready for agitation. It formally started on 7 August, 1905, with the holding of a mammoth protest meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall under presidency of Manindrachandra Nandy. The editor of the *Indian Mirror*, Narendranath Sen, moved the historic Boycott Resolution which found universal approval. The Swadeshi movement continued for seven long years (1905-1911) till the Partition was repealed. The Swadeshi movement embraced every sphere of life and besides the *Buy Swadeshi* movement it gave birth to the National Council of Education, the doctrine of Passive Resistance, the beginning of terrorist activities and the demand for complete *Swaraj* (independence) for India.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RENAISSANCE AND LITERATURE

It is a hazardous and difficult task for a student of history to review nineteenth century Bengali literature which is so vast, varied and rich in all its branches. Nevertheless, an analysis of the history of Bengal in the nineteenth century or indeed of any country in any period of history cannot be complete without a study of its literature, which reflects the life and thought of the people. As we have seen, the nineteenth century in Bengal was an age of national awakening and progress and this found expression in literature. It thus provides the student with a window through which he can look at the age with all its hopes and disappointments, aspirations and disillusion, frustration and fulfilment. The Bengali literature of the nineteenth century is mainly for environment's sake—each prose-writer or poet standing in relation of active participation in his environment. Each writer has a distinct part to play and this adds to its importance and makes it an essential and interesting subject of study from a historical point of view.

The impact of English education and Western learning is evident in Bengali literature of the nineteenth century, which has two characteristic features—patriotic feelings and expression of national sentiment, and humanism. The minds of the writers were drawn to the rich store of Sanskrit literature. The social and political changes in the country also affected the literature and gave it a new turn. Bengali literature, which till now was rural in character, began to lose its contact with village life and culture and began to assume an urban character.

Bengali prose writing practically begins in the nineteenth century. After the battle of Plassey, the traders and officers of the East India Company realized the need of learning the native language as an administrative and economic necessity. Both Clive and Hastings, particularly the latter, were aware of the need, though little tangible was done in this direction.

Some Englishmen like Gilchrist, Charles Wilkins, Gladwin, Halhead and others had a genuine interest in the Indian languages and studied Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali. Of these Halhead deserves a special mention. He knew Bengali very well. In 1775 was published his *Gentoo Code* (a collection of Hindu and Moslem laws). But by far the most important contribution of Halhead was his *Grammar of the Bengali Language* (1778). Though intended for the English officers, this Grammar was also of great help to the Bengalis of the time. Halhead was struck by the lack of prose in Bengali literature. He compared the whole situation "with Greece before the time of Thucydides, when poetry was the only style to which the authors applied themselves". He was particularly preoccupied with the "concerns of common life" which were neglected owing to the lack of a proper medium of expression. The later half of the eighteenth century saw the publication of a number of books in vernacular languages which, however, had little literary or lasting importance. But these no doubt prepared the ground for the literature of the nineteenth century.

The early years of the nineteenth century did not indicate much hope for the future. Learning and culture was at a very low ebb. The study of Bengali prose literature was carried on by the Serampore missionaries and the Pandits of the Fort William College. It may rightly be remarked that the advent of the missionaries corresponds to the beginning of Bengali prose. This was not a mere accidental coincidence. The missionaries took a lively interest in everything around them. Of course there was a religious motive behind their interest. But that should not altogether detract from the actual contribution of the missionaries to the making of the Bengali literature. Necessity is the mother of prose literature in all countries. Of the missionaries, the contribution of Carey stands head and shoulders over those of the others. Apart from religious motives he had a genuine interest in and love for the Bengali language. He was aware of its great possibilities. He knew the language very well and it was to him that the Fort William College owed much of its contribution in the field of literature. The missionaries cannot be regarded as the creators of Bengali prose but nevertheless

they may be hailed as the first group of educated people to discern the force of the Bengali language and to mould its prose in accordance with clear-cut purposes. That this awareness of theirs was not that of dilettantes may be seen from the following excerpt :

“The Bengalee may be considered as more nearly allied to the Sungskrita than any of the other languages of India ; ...four-fifths of the words in the language are pure Sungskrita. Words may be compounded with such a facility, and to so great an extent in Bengalee as to convey ideas with the utmost precision, a circumstances which adds much to its copiousness. On these, and many other accounts, it may be esteemed one of the most expressive and elegant languages of the East.”

The Serampore Mission published a Bengali translation of the Bible, started vernacular newspapers and also published a few old Bengali books and a number of Sanskrit works. The Bengali translation of the Bible did not have the desired effect and the language of the books published was too cumbrous and confused to have any general appeal to the Bengali reading public. Still the Mission must be credited with the breaking of the ice.

The Fort William College, founded in 1800, started the cultivation of Bengali and Sanskrit under Carey in 1801. Carey became the Professor of Sanskrit and Bengali and occupied that post until 1831. Mritunjoya Vidyalkar was appointed Head Pandit under him. There was a number of Assistant Pandits, among whom were Ramram Bose, Ramnath Vidyavachaspati, Sripati Mukherjee, Rajiblochan Mukherjee, Anandachandra, Kasinath Mukherjee and Padmalochan Churamoni. Between 1800 and 1813 these Pandits published a large number of Bengali books intended for the young civilians in training in the College. Even after 1815 the college published many books, but with the arrival of Raja Rammohun Roy in 1814, and the foundation of the School Book Society and the Hindu College (1817), these books were lost in obscurity. The books published by the Fort William College (1800 to 1813) transcended the narrow limits of their objective and attracted the attention of the reading Bengali people at large. The subjects were chosen

by Carey and the Pandits were also guided by him. These works can broadly be classified into three categories : Stories and legends, History, and Philosophy. Of these books Carey's *Kathopokathan* (Dialogues) is important. The authorship of the book is not definitely known. Its object was to acquaint the young civilians with the Bengali colloquial language. A vivid and realistic picture of rural life in Bengal is depicted in the work.

The quasi-historical books are void of any national sentiment and marked flattery of the missionaries and the English is noticeable. But among these again Mritunjaya Vidyalkar's *Rajavali* (1808) strikes a different tone and is of some value as a historical work. The great success of these books was that they raised the curiosity of their readers, which was in itself an indication of a coming change. These works marked the first stage of the evolution of Bengali prose. The absence of sufficient punctuation makes these books almost unreadable today, besides which their language and the construction of their sentences are very confused and complicated.

Carey employed among others two associate writers of unusual talent—Ramram Bose and Mritunjaya Vidyalkar. Ramram Bose's chief works are *Raja Pratapaditya Charitra* (1801) and *Lipimala* (1802). He had everything but seriousness. His style is full of jargon and, in spite of his remarkable grasp of colloquialism, his very want of tenacity deprived him of becoming the founder of Bengali prose style. A main weakness of early Bengali prose was the use of far too many Persian and Arabic words. Carey, mainly out of his deep respect for Sanskrit, attempted to put an end to this practice and Ramram Bose's *Lipimala* may be regarded as the first instance of this effort. Mritunjaya Vidyalkar may rightly be regarded as the first artist of Bengali prose-literature before Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. His main works are *Batris Simhasan* (1802), *Hitopodesh* (1808), *Rajavali* (1808) and *Probodhachandrika* (1813). Of him Marshman wrote, "His knowledge of the Sanskrit classics was unrivalled and his Bengali composition has never been surpassed for ease, simplicity and vigour." If we consider the time in which



Mritunjoya lived, Marshman's observation is more than justified. But otherwise Mritunjoya's prose was too 'chaste' in style and this marred his writing to some extent. He was, however, a master artist and made experiments with different forms of the language. In *Probodhachandrika* he used colloquial words and this made the book very popular. There is a touch of materialism in this book, which infused a new life into Bengali prose-literature. Like Carey's *Kathopokathan*, the *Probodhachandrika* gives the reader a picture of contemporary society. Mritunjoya's deep sympathy for the poor peasants is clearly evident in his work. Such a lively account of the miseries of the peasants is not to be found in any other writing except that of Dinabandhu Mitra. His views on the *Sati* rite did much to strengthen the movement for its abolition. His *Rajavali* may rightly be regarded as our first historical book worth its name. Of course Ramram Bose's *Raja Pratapaditya Charitra* and Rajiblochon Mukherjee's *Maharaja Krishnachandra rayasa Charitram* etc. reveal an interest in the past and an attempt to write historical books. With all his talent and abilities the fundamental drawback of Mritunjoya was his lack of reasoning and of a broad outlook towards life.

Between 1813 and 1833 journalism served as the sole incentive to Bengali literature. Journalism and prose became inseparable. The period saw the beginning of an intense conflict between opposing ideas and ideals. The Press, therefore, became one of the main instruments of propagating different ideologies. Each paper had a distinct ideal, religious and social, and was marked by a spirit of protest. Among these papers, the most notable were, the *Samachar Darpan* (1818) and *Digdarshan* (1818) both edited by Marshman; *Sambad Kaumudi* (1821) edited by Rammohun; *Samachar Chandrika* (1822) edited by Bhabanicharan Banerjee, and a little later the *Sambad Prabhakar* (1831) of Iswarachandra Gupta and the *Bangadut* (1829) of Nilratna Haldar. All these editors were also writers. But the topical urge produced only arid and inartistic prose in this period. It may justly be remarked that had there been no such 'topical urge', Rammohun Roy might not have written metaphysical essays. This is the *sine qua non* of the nineteenth century

—the co-relation of Metaphysics with Reality, the juxtaposition of Spirit and Matter.

The New Age found expression for the first time in the writings of Raja Rammohun Roy. He was not strictly speaking a literary man. His writings were merely means of giving vent to his social and religious ideas, of defending himself and denouncing his adversaries. In his works Rammohun the man is more evident than Rammohun the writer. His Bengali works may broadly be divided into three categories : Translation, Interpretation or Exposition, Debates or Polemical writings. His translations, strictly confirming to the original, are easy to understand and are convincing. The language is clear and expressive. But as literature they are not of any great value. His mastery of Bengali grammar is evident from his *Gaudia Vayakaran* or Grammar of the Bengali Language. The language of his controversial tracts or essays is neither easy nor attractive. Like his contemporaries he did not use punctuation judiciously, though he was the first to be aware of the necessity of syntax in prose. He was an able satirist, but his works are generally void of wit or humour. Throughout his life he fought against numerous adversaries, and thus found little time to appreciate or enjoy creative literature. It is a pity that though he laid the foundation of Bengali grammar yet he did not write good literary prose.

A feature of all his writings is that they are free from any sentimentality or emotionalism. He always strictly adhered to reason and to the Sastras. His words are well chosen, crisp and his style is marked by brevity. For all his limitations Rammohun is rightly credited with laying the foundation stone of Bengali prose, and for solving the mystery of the Bengali syntax. No predecessor or contemporary of Rammohun could create such stir, movement or agitation of thought among the people as did Rammohun through his writings. His tracts and essays struck at the root of immobility and stagnation. He was also the pioneer of philosophical writings in Bengali. His works represent the first expression of the enlightened Bengali intellectual mind which was at the helm of the Indian Awakening.

Among Rammohun's contemporaries notable as writers-

were Kasinath Tarkapanchanan, Gaurikanta Bhattacharya, Gaurmohan Vidyalkar, Bhabanicharan Banerjee and others, most of whom were his adversaries. Kasinath Tarkapanchanan was a great scholar, though he had no knowledge of the English language. He had fine literary qualities. Gaurikanta was also a renowned Sanskrit scholar and his *Jnananjana* (1821) was a forceful retort to Rammohun's religious views. Gaurmohan Vidyalkar was the author of *Strisiksha Vidhayak* (1822) which was published by the School Book Society. The book, advocating women's education, became very popular and was widely read. His *Kavita-mritakupa* (1826) for school children was also a good work. Another important literary figure of the period was Bhabanicharan Banerjee. He was mainly a satirist, whose main object was the preservation of the existing social and religious order and the revival of Puranic culture. He ridiculed the nineteenth century 'Babu Samaj'. His main works were *Nabababu Bilas*, *Kalikata Kamalalaya*, *Nababibi Bilas* and the *Duti Bilas*. We cannot be definite as to his authorship of the last mentioned book. His *Nabababu Bilas* was appreciated in the *Friend of India* for throwing light on the habits and economy of rich 'native' families, and affording a glance behind the scenes of Bengali life. In his paper the *Samachar Chandrika*, Bhabanicharan sought to vindicate orthodox Hinduism and his editorials were marked with sharp and direct attacks on his adversaries. Unfortunately, even though he was a great scholar, Bhabanicharan's writings were not free from vulgarity and obscurity which is sadly evident in his *Duti Bilas*.

Iswarchandra Gupta (1812-1859), the editor of *Sambad Prabhakar*, occupies an important position in the history of Bengali literature, especially of Bengali poetry. The forties of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a re-orientation in Bengali poetry and the development of a more modern style. Bharatchandra was the last representative of mediaeval Bengali poetry as well as the frontier of the poetry that was coming into existence. Gods and goddesses were the main theme of Bharatchandra's poems. Between Bharatchandra and Iswar Gupta there was a big gap during which no noteworthy poet was born. This was a period of transition, and it took quite a long time before the new changes

found expression in poetry. This gap was filled up by *Kavi-walas* (poetasters) who were mostly illiterate or half-literate, but had a gift of composing songs and singing them entertainingly. These were mostly intended for common men and for different fairs, festivals and similar occasions. *Panchalis*, *Tappa*-songs, *Kavi*-songs etc. chiefly comprised the poetry of the period. Though void of refined taste, artistic fineness or noble sentiment, the *Kavi*-songs were interesting, exciting, and full of brilliant wit and humour. These songs were spontaneous and, "heralded in however imperfect a form, the beginning of a new phase of our poetry with immense future possibility", and they served as a heritage to Iswar Gupta. Among the earlier verse makers of the nineteenth century Ramnidhi Gupta's songs had intense lyrical tension. Iswar Gupta published a collection of some of these *Kavi-walas* with a critical appreciation.

Now a member of the progressive Brahmo Samaj, now a severe, hoarse critic of changing social manners and customs, Iswar Gupta was the virtual embodiment of the age itself. His poems reflect the ideological conflicts of the times in which he lived. He was, one may say, an "occasional poet"; contemporary events such as the widow remarriage movement, the *Kulin* system, women's education, Alexander Duff and missionary activities, Young Bengal, and the Sepoy Mutiny overwhelmed his mind and were the subjects of his poems. Eternal Ideas such as Beauty, Love and Tragedy are singularly lacking in his verses. He was a staunch supporter of British rule in India. He denounced the Mutiny and indecorously ridiculed Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi. But we also find him criticising the economic drain of the country in *Sambad Prabhakār* (5 September, 1848) and his patriotic feelings have found expression in poems such as *Matribhasa*, *Swadesh*, *Bharater Abastha* etc. He was against Western education as it had, according to him, diverted the students' minds from the ancestral religion to Christianity. At the same time he welcomed the Wood's Despatch of 1854 and expressed his joy at the proposal for setting up universities. He was against women's education but we find him supporting the same cause in a poem published in another paper—*Sambad Sadhuranjan* (28 May,

1849). He had always zealously defended Hindu social rites and customs and existing orthodoxy, for which it has been said that "his roots were in the old Bengal untouched by Western influence." He had no sound English education and was thus unaware of the new fountain of knowledge and inspiration. But yet Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* was translated and published in his *Sambad Prabhakār*. It has not been ascertained from any valid source whether the translation was his own or not. However, the very fact of its publication is evidence of his rationalistic tendencies, which had not much connection with his acquaintance with the English language. Bankimchandra remarked that had Iswarchandra Gupta learnt English, Bengali literature would have made greater progress in his time. Strangely enough, it was Iswarchandra Gupta who introduced Akshoykumar Datta (whose guiding principles were Reasoning and Intellect) to Devendranath Tagore. Akshoykumar wrote regularly in Iswar Gupta's journal for some time. Iswar Gupta was a great admirer of Devendranath Tagore and for some time was an active member of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha*—the vanguard then of progressive views and reforms. He had travelled extensively, had contact with the masses, and knew the people intimately. In this respect he can only be compared with Dinabandhu Mitra, who was one of his disciples.

Iswar Gupta was a master of the *Payar* form of verse. He was a great satirist and had a modern sense of realism. In variety, satire and secular attitude he cut new ground in Bengali poetry. His influence on the later poets, such as, Rangalal Banerjee, Hemchandra Banerjee and Nabinchandra Sen in their earlier stages cannot be denied. But vulgarity and obscurity often marred his poems. In this respect he may be said to have inherited the tradition of his predecessors, the *Kavi-walas*. Iswar Gupta is not much remembered as a prose-writer. But his editorials in the *Sambad Prabhakār* have earned the admiration of modern scholars. His *Kali-Kirtan* and *Kavivar Bharatchandra Rayer Jibani Vrittanta* are valuable materials for Bengali literature. The *Sambad Prabhakār* which he edited was first published as a weekly in 1831. From 1839 it became a daily paper. Besides the *Prabhakār*

he edited three other weekly papers namely, *Sambad Ratnavali* (1845), *Pasanda Pidan* (1846) and *Sambad Sadhuranjan* (1847). The *Sambad Prabhakar* became the forum of many budding writers like Rangalal Banerjee, Bankimchandra Chatterjee and others. Iswar Gupta was the first man to organize a literary circle in Bengal. He always encouraged young and new writers. Even schoolboys were given an impetus to write. Every year he organized a *Nababarsha Utsab* (New Year's Day ceremony) in which all writers of different groups and shades of opinions were cordially welcomed. Even Young Bengal representatives like Krishnamohun Banerjee and Kasiprosad Ghose were invited to participate in these functions. Many later stalwarts of Bengali literature including Bankim and Rangalal owed much to the fostering patronage of Iswar Gupta. Indeed, Iswar Gupta occupies a unique position in the history of Bengali literature and, as aptly observed, "his importance is more historical than intrinsic." He inherited the tradition of mediaeval poetry and at the same time gave expression for the first time to modern changes. This frontier poet of New and Old Bengal, in spite of his prosaic verses, did something positive as the first heritage-conscious connoisseur and critic of Bengali literature.

Madanmohan Tarkalankar is an example of another writer who, basically a profound scholar of Oriental learning, imbibed the Renaissance spirit. He was not only an eminent contemporary writer but also a Sanskrit scholar, a grammarian, a philosopher and a master of astrology, rhetoric and other branches of learning, in short, a versatile genius. He was well versed in English literature and science. He was a great patron of women's education and was the first man to send his two daughters, Kundamala and Bhuvanmala, to Bethune's school for girls. A great friend and associate of Vidyasagar, he supported the widow remarriage movement and was a philanthropist. He wrote books for the children and in his journal *Sarbasubhakar* supported progressive ideas and movements. His religious belief has confounded the scholars. Some considered him to be a monotheist, others thought him to be a sceptic. There are scholars who are inclined to regard his views as humanitarian—a product of Comte's Positivism and Mills' Utilitarianism. A great scholar

and reputed writer, Madanmohan Tarkalankar lacked personality and energy necessary for the development of all his faculties and their best utilization.

Another tendency of the age, the juxtaposition of Rationalism and Spiritualism—may be seen from the close contact between Devendranath Tagore and Akshoykumar Datta, both of whom belonged to the Brahmo Samaj and wrote for its organ, the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. Devendranath was a prose writer of ability. His autobiography is an outstanding book. It was, however, written probably little before 1894, in the closing years of his life. He wrote regularly in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. Among his other notable works are the *Brahmadharma Grantha* (1850-52) and the *Atmatattva-vidya* (1852). Though fundamentally philosophical works, these are written in lucid Bengali and are marked with clarity and above all sublimity, which make a deep impression on the mind of the reader.

The literary contribution of Akshoykumar Datta has not properly been assessed in view of his being a contemporary of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar—one of the makers of Bengali prose-literature. The main object of Akshoykumar's writings was the welfare of his countrymen. He sought to strike at the root of decaying traditions and the immobility of the people and to enlighten them with pure knowledge. He had a scientific and intellectual approach to life and the same spirit is found in all his works. Akshoykumar was influenced by the Rationalism of James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Comte, Comte and other Western thinkers and philosophers. He was a great scholar and a voracious reader. His books, in spite of their severe intellectual form, caused a revolution in the realm of thought in Bengal. He became the editor of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* in 1843 and the great success of the journal was mainly due to him. Speaking of this journal a contemporary wrote, "People all over Bengal awaited every issue of that paper with eagerness, and the silent and sickly but indefatigable worker at his desk swayed for a number of years the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of the people of Bengal." As Brojendra-nath Banerjee observed, Akshoykumar was the first writer to bring philosophy and science into the fold of literature.

Another scholar hails him as the 'first moral teacher' of Bengal. In the early fifties of the nineteenth century were published his stupendous work on Man's relationship with External Nature. (*Bahyya Bastur Sahit Manavprakṛitir Samandha Vicar.*) The book was based on George Comb's *Constitution of Man*. In his *Dharamriti* (1856) he vehemently attacked prevalent social evils, namely, early-marriage, polygamy, miseries of widows, etc. His other monumental work is *Bharatvarsiya Upasak Sampradaya* in two volumes. The first volume was published in 1870 and the second in 1883. Akshoykumar's erudition, analytical power and patriotism are found in these two volumes. This is also evidence of his catholicity and vast range of his thought—a man going from the Western philosophers to Indian sages in search of pure knowledge and truth. Though mainly based on the model supplied by H. H. Wilson's *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of the Hindus*, yet *Bharatbarsiya Upasak Sampradaya*, indeed, attains the status of an original work because of Akshoykumar's readiness in collecting more and richer materials from other sources. He also wrote lessons on modern knowledge for beginners and in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* he discussed many topical problems including the exploitation of the poor peasants by the indigo planters. He wrote in chaste Bengali and his works, being mainly on extremely complex and abstract subjects, could only be appreciated by a small group of intellectuals in the country. In later years his prose-writing became more lucid owing to the influence of Vidyasagar.

Iswarchandra Vidyasagar is rightly regarded as the father of Bengali prose-style. The Bengali prose was born in the early years of the nineteenth century. In the days of Ram-mohun it was in its infancy. Akshoykumar Datta and Devendranath saw it through childhood and it reached its youth in the writings of Vidyasagar. He wrote mainly in order to spread education among the people. He was not primarily a literary man but rather wrote with a utilitarian objective. In all he wrote 17 Sanskrit works, 4 English and 32 Bengali—a total of 53 books. Of these 15 were school textbooks. Vidyasagar was always concerned with men and their material progress and wrote nothing on religion. In



1847 was published his *Betal Panchabimsati*. This marked the beginning of a graceful Bengali prose literature. Actually his first work was *Vasudevacharita* based on the Tenth Canto of the *Bhagavata* and written for the students of the Fort William College. The date of the book is uncertain but it must have been written between 1842 and 1847. It was, however, not approved by the Fort William College authorities, who considered the author's characterization of *Vasudeva* as unsuitable for the young civilians. In 1848 he translated into Bengali Marshman's *History of Bengal*. This was followed by *Jibancharit* (1849) and *Bodhodaya* (1851). The former contained short biographies of great Europeans of science and letters and latter was a standard textbook for school students. He was the first writer to publish essays on and criticism of Sanskrit literature in Bengali (1853). The following years saw the publication of a large number of books including *Sakuntala* (1854), *Charitavali* (1856), *Kathamala* (1856) etc. In his work on widow remarriage (1856) Vidyasagar shows supreme skill in argument. His books for the children were modelled on those of Chambers and rendered an invaluable service to the cause of primary education ; they have hardly been bettered even today. In his books Vidyasagar drew his material both from Sanskrit classics and popular tales as well as from Western fables and biographies.

Rabindranath considers Bengali prose as the greatest creation of Vidyasagar and calls him the first real artist of the language. Vidyasagar was the first to show that language is not merely a medium of expressing certain views or stating facts. He systematized the language, arranged it and formed as it were a disciplined army out of a multitude of rabbles. He made the language forceful, lucid and dynamic. Bengali prose-writing was freed from rhetoric and unnecessary complexities. By his selection of words and presentation he lent it beauty and fulness. He rescued the language both from pedanticism and pedestrianism. Sanskrit literature was the ideal of his writing and consequently he evolved an elegant, stately and chaste style. He did not have any true literary style in the modern sense of the term, but his language, though stately and chaste, was pure, simple and forceful. The 'literary style' developed with Bankimchandra and

Rabindranath both of whom built the superstructure on the foundation laid by Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar's works do not appeal to their readers on account of any 'particular' aspect but have a 'general' appeal. He had a parental affection for the society of his day. His prose, indeed, has the responsibility of a father and the grace of a mother. The Reformer and the Artist went hand in hand in him. He succeeded in creating a flexible type of prose which evolved into that of Bankimchandra and Rabindranath. Vidyasagar had an unusual breadth of interest and this combined with a balanced national vision in this great writer and reformer.

We have already referred to the importance of Iswar Gupta, his skill in organizing a literary group, and his influence on budding poets among whom were Rangalal Banerjee (1827-1887), Hemchandra Banerjee (1838-1903) and Nabinchandra Sen (1837-1909). Western influence on the Bengali poets of the period is noticeable. The educated Bengali in this period read the poems of Milton, Dryden, Pope, Goldsmith, Grey etc. and the works of Gibbon, Defoe, Johnson and others. Rangalal, Hemchandra and Nabinchandra were influenced by Western writers and at the same time by Sanskrit literature, Bharatchandra and Iswarchandra Gupta. Their poetry is marked with Western awareness and seeks to find a national heritage—Western in technical propensity but typically Bengali in content and spirit. They wrote National Romance, heroic and long narrative poems drawing material from Puranic tales, historical legends and Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan*, on the model of Scott, Byron, Moore and others. Rangalal Banerjee is the pioneer of long historical narrative and heroic poems. He first became widely known in 1858 with the publication of his *Pudmini-Upakhyan*, which formed the turning point from the period of erotic and social satires. His other works were *Karmadevi* (1862), *Surasundari* (1868) and *Kanchi Kaveri* (1879), all of which are inspired by patriotic pride and nationalism. These poems are also characterized by a bardic tone. Hemchandra's social satires on the life in Calcutta were modelled on Iswar Gupta's satires. But growing national sentiment is the keynote of his poems. He sought to give expression to Puranic cult and tradition with an intense national fervour in his most famous

work *Vrittasamhar* (1875-77). Hemchandra's main weakness was his "unimpressive prosaic diction and an inherent lack of poetic fervour."

Nabinchandra Sen's fame as a poet rests mainly on his three long narrative poems—*Raivatak* (1886), *Kurukshetra* (1893) and *Pravash* (1896). His other famous work is *Palasir Yuddha* (1875), a historical narrative on the model of Byron. In the epic trio Nabinchandra sought to give the Epic and Puranic culture a modern interpretation and attempted a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy and learning. As epic poems these were not much of a success. His *Palasir Yuddha* is more important for the impetus it gave to national aspirations than as a literary work. He depicts Sirajuddaulah as the symbol of vice and Mohanlal that of national sentiment. Nabinchandra had poetic imagination and rhythm but often lacked a sense of propriety. He successfully infused vigour and thrilling emotion in his poems but failed to restrain his feeling where necessary.

Nabinchandra Sen was very much influenced by Utilitarianism, Positivism and Darwin's Theory of Evolution, as were all the other poets and writers. The influence of scientific theories is generally discernible in contemporary literature. Writers were inspired by the growing spirit of nationalism and the nationalists also were inspired by the writers. The latter, however, did not have any definite political objective. National progress and uplift was what they aspired to and to give vent to this feeling they chose themes from Indian history and legends.

It has rightly been remarked that "the flowering of the Renaissance began with the poetry of Madhusudan Datta, the drama of Dinabandhu Mitra and the novels of Bankimchandra Chatterjee." Indeed, Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73) is justly regarded as the 'morning star' as well as 'the midday noon' of nineteenth century Bengali poetry. Madhusudan came of an aristocratic Bengali family and was educated in the Hindu College, which was still in the grip of the Derozian influence. He not only became a follower of that tradition but also embraced Christianity in 1843. He was a literary genius who had thoroughly studied both Western and the Sanskrit literature. He was inspired by the

works of Homer, Virgil, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Tasso, Dante, Milton and others and at the same time by the great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and classical Sanskrit authors like Kalidasa. He led the life of "a typical Italian humanist indulging in wild free living" and the mainspring of his thought was the Western classics. His first work was an English narrative, *The Captive Lady*. He, however, soon realized the folly of writing in a foreign language and began to write in Bengali. He had a short, meteoric literary career of approximately five to six years.

Madhusudan's first Bengali writing was *Sarmistha* (1859) which caused quite a sensation owing to its striking a new note; but the work that dazzled both readers and critics was his *Meghnad-badh Kavya* (1861) which is the first literary epic of modern India. It was the "first highly individualistic attempt at an epic in Bengali in the Western sense of the term". In this heroic epic, he freed the fettered *payar* form and thereby introduced blank verse in Bengali poetry. This was a further manifestation of the spirit of the age, with its breaking away from tradition and age-old conventions. The *Meghnad-badh Kavya* ended the "poetic slumber" of Bengali poetry. Though based on the *Ramayana*, Michael gave the epic theme a most daring and unconventional interpretation. To him *Ravana* was the Man and *Rama* appeared to him as timid, tied with conventional ethical code and conduct. *Ravana* was the symbol of New Bengal with its newly awakened ambition and desire remaining unfulfilled. The existing political structure and the social order failed to awaken the people and the new spirit of revolt against the old traditional glories and values poured forth in Michael's *Meghnad-badh Kavya*. *Virangana-Kavya* (1862) was a remarkable string of epistolary poems by Madhusudan. It is evidently modelled upon Ovid's *Heroides* and consists of certain imaginary verse-letters written by enlightened women who no longer want to remain dependent upon custom, convention and traditional social values. Here one finds reflection of the movement for the emancipation of women led by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. The work is significantly dedicated to Vidyasagar, whom Madhusudan calls the 'First Man'. This collection of epistolary poems expresses the

*Zeitgeist* in the poet and as such it occupies a unique position in Bengali literature.

In 1865-66 was published his *Chaturdash Padavali* which marked the beginning of the sonnet in Bengali poetry. These poems were generally influenced by Petrarch, Shakespeare and Milton. Michael's patriotism and national feelings also found expression in these sonnets. Michael was also the first to write a successful tragedy in Bengali. This was his *Krishna-kumari* (1861) which had a historical basis. *Padmavati* (1860) was a half-romantic drama based on the Greek legend of the *Apple of Discord*. He also successfully tried his hand at writing social satires. In one of these, *Buro Salikher Ghade Roe* (1860) he had criticised the vices of elderly and pretentious libertines and in the other *Ekei ki Bale Sabhyata* (1860), the vices of Anglicised men to which group he himself belonged. Michael was classic in form, romantic in spirit—creating certain individual characters who stand face to face with Destiny. *Ravana*, *Meghnad* and all his other chief characters are distinct individuals with their mundane yet elevated spirit. Michael is a phenomenon in the history of Bengali literature, one of the best products of the Renaissance.

An interesting aspect of nineteenth century Bengali poetry is the gradual evolution of lyric poetry. In the earlier years lyrical features can be traced in the verses of Ramnidhi Gupta, one of the well known *Kavi-walas*. Iswarchandra Gupta also composed a number of poems containing lyrical elements. From about the middle of the century the general trend was towards writing heroic or epic poems. Rangalal, Hemchandra, Nabinchandra and even Michael all mainly attempted heroic poems. But even then lyrical poems or odes continued to be written. Rangalal, the pioneer of long narrative poems, wrote a number of odes such as *Kal*, *Sarat*, *Padmapusper Prati* and others. Hemchandra published *Kavitavali*, a collection of lyrical poems. *Avakasranjini* is a well-known lyrical composition of Nabinchandra Sen. The happiness and sorrows of Nabinchandra's personal life found expression in these lyrical poems. Some of the sonnets of Michael are lyrics of high quality. Besides these, his *Brajangana* (1861) presents the Vaisnava lyric in a modern

form, replacing devotion by humanism. But the first really noteworthy romantic pure lyric poet of the nineteenth century was Biharilal Chakravarty (1835-1894). He composed lyrical poems with a musical structure, and completely broke away from the epic tradition and followed an independent line. He was thus the first to introduce conscious lyricism into Bengali poetry. His poems were subjective and introspective, evincing a strongly individual feeling. In his *Sarada Mangal*, Biharilal realizes in moments of his poetic ecstasy "the eternal self-manifesting power of infinite attributes—attributes of beauty, love and knowledge". It is for his romantic lyricism that Biharilal is regarded as the 'morning star' of Bengali lyric poetry heralding the rise of the sun—Rabindranath Tagore. But even Biharilal, a mystic poet, was influenced by the new spirit of the age and we find him pressing for the rights of women in his *Bangasundari* (1869). Among other minor poets of the period were Surendranath Mazumdar (1838-78), Devendranath Sen (1855-1920), Govindachandra Das (1855-1918) and Akshoykumar Baral (1865-1918). Surendranath had sympathy for the women-folk and gave expression to it in his poems. The others were mainly romantic, lyric poets.

While Michael Madhusudan was creating a revolution in Bengali literature two of his close friends and admirers were experimenting with a more popular style. Pearychand Mitra, a well-known Derozian, wrote *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1858) in colloquial language in the pen-name of Tekchand Thakur. This was the first full-fledged Bengali novel, the preceding ones being rather romantic tales than novels. Pearychand was known for his liberal and progressive views. As a writer he was not very creative but he brought in new ideas and was the first to write about family life realistically. *Alal* had an ethical object as well—to expose and ridicule social evils and suggest remedies. Besides *Alal*, Pearychand wrote *Abhedi* and *Adhyatmika*, books with a spiritual emphasis. An active organizer of the Horticulture Society and the first Indian member of the staff of the Metcalfe Library, Pearychand was a staunch supporter of women's education, which cause he espoused in his *Ramaranjika*. The experiment made by Pearychand in *Alal* was seconded by Kali-

prosanna Sinha (1840-1870) in his *Hutum Penchar Naksa* published in 1862. It was a lively sketch of social life in Calcutta written in the spoken language. Kaliprosanna was, however, equally if not more at home in 'chaste' style and his translation of the *Mahabharata* (1860-66) was a stupendous work, though its single authorship has been questioned by modern critics. He was a philanthropist with patriotic feelings and progressive views. Both Pearychand Mitra and Kaliprosanna Sinha were great satirists and they sought to raise the hybrid colloquial language to a higher level, though with little permanent success.

Dinabandhu Mitra (1828-1873), a playwright of unsurpassed promise, was another outstanding literary personage of the century. His most famous drama, the *Neel Darpan*, published in 1860, occupies a distinct place in Bengali literature not so much for its literary merit as for an expression of popular indignation against the brutal tyranny of the indigo planters. All of his works are charged with the spirit of realism and a deep sympathy for the people. Among his farcical dramas are *Sadhabar Ekadosi* (1866) and *Bie Pagla Budo* (1866), while *Kamale Kamini* (1873) is a well-known romantic drama of his. In *Lilavati* (1867) the author gives a meticulously vivid picture of contemporary social life. Dinabandhu had a progressive mind and was a great supporter of Michael. He welcomed modern tendencies and experiments in Bengali literature. An objectively dispassionate outlook and yet a sympathetic approach are the characteristics of his writings. But a proper estimate of Dinabandhu Mitra is not possible without a reference to the National Theatre founded in 1872, and to other contemporary dramatists.

It was the *Hindu Mela* under the influence of self-conscious nationalism which paved the way to the National Theatre. Jyotirindranath Tagore, a writer of historical and social plays, wrote: "After the Hindu Mela was over, I always thought how to arouse in my countrymen the love for their nation. At last to achieve the purpose, I decided to write dramas wherein I could insert heroic legends from the glorious phases of Ancient Indian history." Indeed, the

Bengali stage and nationalism in Bengal are almost inseparable, and in the words of Bipin Chandra Pal it was the Bengali stage which "first proclaimed the gospel of the religion of the motherland in an opera, now completely forgotten called *Bharat Mata* or Mother India.<sup>1</sup> Among the earliest dramatists were Jogendranath Gupta, Taracharan Sikdar, Ramnarayan Tarkalankar, Kaliprosanna Sinha, Umacharan Chatterjee, Umeshchandra Mitra and Michael Madhusudan Datta. In the sixties of the century a number of dramas were staged as amateur enterprises. But with the foundation of the National Theatre by the Baghbazar Dramatic Association in 1872, professional enterprise began. Dinabandhu dominated the stage of the National Theatre because of his selection of nationally relevant themes and his vivid delineation of characters. Apart from the fact that his dramas could be staged without much cost, his dialogues sprang directly from his most intimate acquaintance with the poor masses and the middle-class—thus combining both strata of the society. To listen to these dialogues is simply to perceive the aspirations, convictions and thwarted values of those represented. His dramas render an artistic synopsis of the life and thought of the people of the age. This is why Girishchandra Ghose, the next unrivalled actor and dramatist of the Bengali stage, called Dinabandhu the father of the Bengali national stage.

Girishchandra Ghose (1844-1911) wrote in all 61 plays but he himself was very little, if at all, influenced by any of his predecessors. He borrowed considerably from the West but, as aptly said, "he did not bury the past" but "nationalised Western patterns." Girishchandra enriched Bengali drama, made it popular, and set a very high standard for his successors. He was ably supported by Amritlal Bose (1853-1929), who also was a reputed author of satires and farcical dramas. Two dramas—*Sarat Sarojini* (1874) and *Surendra Binodini* (1875) of Upendranath Das were protests against Government excesses and the molestation of women by licentious officers. These two dramas so much roused public feeling that the Government had to pass the Dramatic

<sup>1</sup> The author was Kiranchandra Banerjee.



Performances Act in 1876 imposing restrictions on the stage. Towards the end of the century the Bengali drama and the stage reached a high watermark through the works of Kshirodeprasad Vidyabinod and Dwijendralal Roy some of which attract large audiences even today.

In the post-mutiny period Bengali literature in all its branches—prose, poetry, essay-writing, dramas, historical works etc. had made great progress owing substantially to the contribution of the writers discussed above. Besides these were the contribution of Bhudeb Mukherjee (1825-94), Dwijendranath Tagore (1840-1926), Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan (180-1886), Rajendralal Mitra (1822-1891) Rajnarayan Bose (1826-1899) and others. Bhudeb Mukherjee was a great scholar with an encyclopaedic breadth of knowledge. Among his notable works which enriched Bengali literature were *Swapanalabdha Bharater Itihas*, *Samajik Prabandha* (1892) *Paribarik Prabandha* (1882), *Aitihasik Upanyasa* (1862) etc. His main object was to emphasize the need of reconstructing the social pattern in conformity with the time-honoured national heritage. Dwijendranath Tagore, the eldest son of Devendranath Tagore, was a versatile genius, another member of the Tagore family, which made much contribution to the Bengal Renaissance. Dwijendranath was equally good in prose and poetry and had a forceful, smooth and entertaining way of writing. His essays on religion, philosophy, social problems, etc. were thought-provoking. He started a paper, *Bharati*, in 1877 and edited it for one year.

An outstanding progressive weekly with a very high journalistic standard was the *Somprokash* founded by Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan in 1858. Dwarakanath was a professor at the Sanskrit College and every noble and progressive cause found in him a ready and zealous supporter. He was a very eminent journalist and fearlessly wrote for what he thought to be right and necessary for the welfare of the people. Another notable literary paper of the period was the *Bibidhartha-Sangraha* (The Miscellany Magazine). It was started in 1851 by Rajendralal Mitra (1822-1891) with the help of the Vernacular Literary Society. It was a very popular monthly which included articles on various subjects

of general interest. Rajendralal Mitra was the pioneer among Indian historians and he raised studies in Indian history and culture to a scientific status ; he is rightly regarded as "our first original historian trained in Western methods." In 1848 he had become the Assistant Secretary and the Librarian of the Asiatic Society. He soon earned admiration for his researches in ancient Indian history. Later he became the Secretary of the Society and ultimately he was elected its President in 1885. Rajendralal Mitra was a philologist of great insight and was a profound scholar. He wrote numerous articles and about fifty learned books on various subjects of history and culture. All his works were characterized by an analytical approach and masterly grasp of the subject. He was the first to plead for a reform of Bengali spelling. He also compiled geographical terms in Bengali in the first two sessions of the *Saraswat Samaj* (1882) founded by Jyotirindranath Tagore. Bengali historical scholarship inaugurated by Rajendralal was continued and enriched by Haraprosad Sastri, Saratchandra Das, Pratapchandra Ghose, Chandrasekhar Banerjee, Nagendranath Bose, Monomohan Chakravarty and others. Indeed, by the end of the century Bengali scholarship had reached an unprecedented height of achievement.

Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) is regarded by some as "the greatest figure of the second phase of the Bengal Renaissance." One may only accept this view with some reservations, but Bankim's contribution to Bengali literature cannot be overestimated. He combined within himself many positive virtues—national and international, social and religious. He sought for a fusion of the Western and the Eastern spirit. His catholicity of vision helped him to blend the apparently opposing thoughts of Comte's Positivism and the Spiritualism of the *Gita*. Similarly Rousseau, Mill and many other Western philosophers of divergent paths were accorded a harmonizing welcome by him.

As a novelist his works are based on a European style ; his historical novels are modelled on Scott and depict the social scene, contain political and philosophical theories, and present psychological conflicts in a masterly manner. No other writer has yet surpassed him in his extensiveness. His

novels "introduce us to a world which extends over a large area in space and covers a long period of time, and this world is inhabited by men and women of a larger build than is to be found in life or in the novels of other Bengali novelists." Bankim believed in Destiny but at the same time believed that one can control it by means of his intellect and moral sense. Faith in human power and potentialities is one of the dominant features of Bankim's works. This was a reflection of the spirit of the age in which he lived. Humanism is the central theme of his writings and his *Krishnacharitra*, *Sitaram*, *Debi-Chaudhurani* etc. emphasize the same doctrine. Krishna is Divine because of his immanent and human potentialities. Bankim's humanism is the product of a synthesis—Comte's Positivism, Mill's Utilitarianism and the *Gita's* Spiritualism fused into one great principle. His *Debi-Chaudhurani* stands also for the ideal of female perfection, divine and humane.

In his social outlook Bankim was inspired by the early socialists like Owen, St. Simon, Proudhon and others. We find him writing for the poor peasants in *Bangadesher Krishak* (The Peasants in Bengal) (1872) and pleading for social equality in *Kamalakanter Daptar* (1885) and *Samya*. But Bankim as an artist and Bankim as a reformer have always been in keen contrast with each other; and an attempt is made at somehow reconciling them in his *Kamalakanter Daptar*—the journals of Kamalakanta, modelled on De Quincy's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Bankim valued puritanism, and at times his ethics were opposed to progressive ideas, as for instance, that of widow remarriage.

Bankimchandra was the literary prophet of nationalism. The famous song *Bandemataran* included in his *Anandamath* (1882) became a national hymn and inspired the people to sacrifice all for their motherland. He has been criticised for his Hindu revivalism, for an excessive stress on the Hindu character and tradition and for being rather unfair to the Moslems. We have discussed his connection with the Revival elsewhere and his economic essays certainly espouse the cause of the Moslem peasants with as much zeal and fervour as they do that of

the Hindus. The Fakir in *Sitaram* (1887) certainly reveals his admiration and sympathy for the Moslems. The portrait of Aurangzib, the character of the Mughal nobles and officials, the corruption of the Mughal harem and the incessant plots and intrigues that we find in his works are corroborated by history and this is testified to by no less an authority than Sir Jadunath Sarkar.

His chief organ was *Bangadarshan* which he founded in 1872 and edited for four years. The very name of the paper implies its indebtedness to Addison, and it became the forum of an outstanding group of writers and the leading cultural periodical in the country. Bengal being the chief source of his life and letters, Bankimchandra wrote essays and novels in order to create a new Bengal out of its past tradition. This was a difficult goal for one who was both an artist and reformer. Hence the earlier Bankim, Sri Arabinda rightly observes, "was an artist and the later Bankim was a seer and a nation-builder." An inspired creator of a world of romance, Bankim did not remain satisfied with romanticism only. His idealism, particularly in his last phase gained the upper hand, and that is why he did not attempt any more fictions after *Sitaram* (1887), a historically didactic romance. Indeed, as a novelist, essayist, philosopher, social thinker, nationalist and idealist he was the representative genius of our cultural renaissance. He was 'the emperor' of the Bengali literary world in the real sense of the term.

'Art' wrote Robert Lynd, "has a double origin: a utilitarian father and an aesthetic mother." This may be rightly applied to the writings of Rabindranath Tagore—the culminating apex of the nineteenth century Renaissance of Bengal. Owing to the multifarious aspects of his artistically inclined mind, he succeeded in joining creative necessity and social necessity without sacrificing either of the two. It may be argued that his genius had not grown to its ultimate maturity by the end of the nineteenth century, yet the stamp of genius was noticeable in all the branches of literature that he had touched by that time. While he was still in his teens was published his *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs) (1881) in which Bankimchandra was the first to foresee the advent of

the sun. *The Padavali of Bhanu Singha* (1884) consisting of a series of Vaisnava poems published under the pseudonym of Bhanu Singha drew the admiration of all for their musical structure and lyric qualities. The *Sandhya Sangit* was followed by the publication of the *Prabhat Sangit* (the Morning Songs) and three more volumes of poetry. In 1894 was published his *Sonar Tari* (The Golden Boat) which was an exquisite poetical work by any literary standard. Bankimchandra died in 1894 and the mantle of Bankimchandra's *Bangadarshan* had fallen on *Sadhana*, a literary journal edited by Rabindranath. By the end of the century he had written on almost all literary subjects and lyric poetry, humanism, nationalism, philosophy and the synthesis of East and West found expression in them. "The Golden Boat had been launched and it was destined to make history for nearly fifty years." What began in the nineteenth century ended in him with a cosmopolitan outlook. Even a bare outline of his literary contributions and his epoch making life is beyond the compass of the present review. "Whatever is touched by a genius" said Rabindranath, "turns into gold". It gives at least a faint idea of Rabindranath's significance. The manifold avenues of his creative mind led to retrospection as well as a progressive outlook all over the country. His life and art have made him a cult in modern India. Mahatma Gandhi called him *Gurudeva*, and that title is being justified day by day. His writings have permeated deep into the soul of New India and Tagore has remained the supreme literary figure of our land through three generations. Tagore is still rather neglected and not well understood in the West. Western critics now a days accuse Tagore of over-motivated didacticism. But this attitude is definitely due to the lack of adequate translations of his works. Tagore himself believed that a foreigner must learn his language to evaluate his writings. And that, if possible, is the only way to perceive Rabindranath's contribution to New India and to the literature of the world.

The subjective, yet all pervasive vision of this great seer and poet thus marks the completion of the century. He stands as a mediator between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He combines the constructive attitude of the for-

mer and the artistic nonconformity of the latter. He is the unifying spirit of Indian faith and Western vitality. The Bengal Renaissance or indeed the Indian Awakening started with Raja Rammohun Roy, whom Tagore described as belonging to the lineage of India's great seers, and fittingly it reached its culmination in the Great Man who was the very symbol of a renascent century and the beacon light of a new one.

## APPENDIX

### SOME PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY :

Beginning with the *Atmiya Sabha* of Raja Rammohun Roy, innumerable organizations or associations were founded in Bengal in the nineteenth century. These were mostly called *Sabha* or *Samiti* and the objects and activities of these associations reflected the great awakening of the period, characterized by energetic enterprise, enthusiasm and wide interest in various spheres of life and thought. Some were purely cultural and literary associations, some were concerned with social reform and other aspects of public welfare, and others combined both cultural and welfare activities. Though the century witnessed an ideological conflict between opposite ideas and religious differences, yet these associations generally provided the meeting place of people belonging to different schools of thought for a common objective. In most cases religion and politics were kept out of these organizations and this made it possible for Europeans and enlightened Indians to meet, exchange views, and work for the common good and benefit. In the first half of the century the emphasis was on cultural activities and academic pursuits while in the second half stress was laid on practical work of social reform, education and other welfare activities. In the text of the book we have discussed the more important associations or organizations. Here a short account is given of some other organizations of importance. The dates of their foundation are generally known, but in most cases it cannot be ascertained how long they continued to function.<sup>1</sup>

**GAUDIA SAMAJ :—**The *Gaudia Samaj* was formed on 16 February, 1823. Its members included Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Tarachand Chakravarty, Sibchandra Tagore,

<sup>1</sup> The account is mainly based on two excellent works.

(a) Jogeshchandra Bagal, *Banglar Nabyu Sanskriti*.

(b) *Banglar Nabajagarane Vidyot—Sabhar dan*—article by Benoy Ghose in *Visvabharati Patrika*—12th year, Nos. 3 and 4.

Dwarkanath Tagore, Ramjoya Tarkalankar, Bhabanicharan Banerjee and many other distinguished men of Calcutta. The association was the outcome of a desire to make concerted efforts for the welfare of the country and to spread knowledge of Sastric and other Sanskrit works. Its objects were to diffuse learning among the people, to translate into Bengali and publish books written in other languages, to publish small books in English and Bengali in order to check immoral and anti-Sastric activities among the people, to establish a library of selected books, and to collect scientific apparatus and equipment. The *Gaudia Samaj* thus had a very extensive programme and a broad objective, and it gave an impetus to Bengali language and culture.

**SARVATATTVADEPIKA SABHA :—**This organization was founded on 30 December, 1832, in the building of Raja Ram-mohun Roy's Anglo-Hindu School. Among the founders were Devendranath Tagore (then a student of the Hindu College) and Ramprosad Roy, the youngest son of Ram-mohun. It was a literary club of the students. Its main object was the cultivation of the Bengali language. The love for the vernacular was a very heartening sign and the object of the organization was praised by the *India Gazette* and the *Jnananesvan*.

**BANGABHASA PRAKASIKA SABHA :—**As the name indicates, the object of this organization was to foster the growth of the Bengali language. The date of its foundation is not known, but a meeting of the *Sabha* was held on 8 December, 1836. Pandit Gaurisankar Tarkavagish (later the editor of the popular paper *Sambad Bhaskar*) was its President, and the Secretary was Pandit Durgaprosad Tarkapanchanan. The meetings were held on every Thursday and the members included Iswarchandra Gupta, Kalinath Roy, Harachandra Banerjee (the editor of the *Sambad Purnachandrodaya*), Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Ramlochon Ghose, Pearymohan Bose etc. A feature of the meeting was the concern of the members for objectionable Government Acts. On this meeting, the *Samachar Darpan* reported on 17 December, 1836: "Baboo Kalinath Roy next proposed, that the *Banga Bhasa Prakasika* do interpose when any of the acts of



Government may be found injurious to the country, a resolution be taken that the society should petition Government or take other measures with a view to prevent a national grievance". The issue that was agitating the public mind at the time was the Government Act taxing rent-free land. The *Sambad Prabhakar* on 2 March, 1852 expressed its regret that disunity among its members caused the extinction of such an association.

**JNANACHANDRODAYA** :—This was an institution for the cultivation of the Bengali language. It was founded in September 1836, with Shyamacharan Sarman and Radhanath Ganguly as its President and Secretary respectively.

**PRESERVERANCE SOCIETY** :—Some educated young men of Burrabazar, Calcutta, founded this Society on 31 December, 1847. Gaurdas Bysack—an alumnus of the Hindu College and a close friend of Madhusudan Datta—was its President. At the meetings of the Society articles on education, literature, science etc. were read and discussed. Senior students of the Calcutta Medical College used to take part in the meetings and discuss scientific subjects while benefitting from literary discussions.

**SARBASUBHAKARI SABHA** :—Founded in 1850 (February or March) by some senior students of the Hindu College, the object of this institution was to strive for the all-round welfare of the people. They intended to fight evil customs and practices in the country. For this, on the advice of Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Pandit Madanmohan Tarkalankar, they started the *Sarbasubhakarī Patrikā* (August 1850) in the first issue of which Kulinism, early marriage etc. were criticised and widow remarriage was supported. In this issue Vidyasagar wrote an article on the evils of child-marriage and in the second issue Madanmohan Tarkalankar wrote an article on women's education.

**BANGABHASANUVADAK SAMAJ** :—(In English variously known as Vernacular Translation Society or Vernacular Literature Committee or Literature Vernacular Society) : Mainly on the initiative of Jaykrishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara, this organization was formed in December

1850. Its ideals were the same as those of the *Penny Magazine* in England, and its object was to publish Bengali translations of good English books. This was a remarkable joint endeavour by Indians and enlightened Europeans. Among the committee members were Devendranath Tagore, Jaykrishna Mukherjee, Rasomay Datta, J. D. Bethune, H. Pratt, M. Townsend, Rev. William Kay, J. C. Marshman, W. W. Seton-Carr, H. Woodrow etc. Books such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*, and the *Life of Clive*, were translated and published in the very first year. Under the auspices of the *Samaj* the monthly magazine *Bibidhartha Sangraha* (Miscellany Magazine) was started with Rajendralal Mitra as the editor. The magazine was very popular and made an immense contribution to the spread of knowledge and learning among the people. Later, Radhakanta Deb, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Pearychand Mitra, Rev. James Long and many other illustrious men joined the *Samaj*. Jaykrishna Mukherjee and Rajkrishna Mukherjee, besides making a princely monthly donation, gave their personal library of Bengali books to the institution. From 1856 it undertook the work of publishing original books as well. Prizes were offered to good books, and the first prize winners were Rangalal Banerjee's *Padmini-Upakhyān* and Madhusudan Mukherjee's *Sushilar-Upakhyān*. Many books were published by the *Samaj*, and, the prices being very cheap and the language simple, these books were invaluable for the spread of education and vernacular literature. In 1861 Kaliprosanna Sinha became the editor of the *Bibidhartha Sangraha* but in the same year, for publishing an article on the drama *Neel Darpan*, the paper courted the displeasure of the Government and very soon it had to be discontinued by the *Samaj*. From 1863 a similar paper, the *Rahasya-Sandarbha* was started under the editorship of Rajendralal Mitra and had a short but useful life. The *Bangabhasanubadaḥ Samaj*, through its various published books and the *Miscellany Magazine*, did much for the propagation of knowledge and learning and for the development of the Bengali language.

**BETHUNE SOCIETY :—**The Society, named after Drinkwater Bethune, was founded on 12 August, 1851. The initia-

tive was taken by Dr. F. J. Mouat of the Calcutta Medical College and the Secretary of the Council of Education. He called a meeting of the elite of Calcutta on 11 December, 1851 and "pointed out the great necessity of devising some means of bringing the educated natives more into personal contact with each other." He said that the existing institutions like the *Asiatic Society* and the *Agricultural and Horticultural Society* were established for specific purposes and did not provide all the necessary facilities for contact among the enlightened people of Bengal. He pointed out the special need of "such means of mental improvement and intellectual recreation" in Bengal, "where, from the very constitution of native society and the social customs of the people, even the private relations of individuals and families were necessarily much restricted". The proposal of Dr. Mouat was warmly welcomed by others and a resolution was passed that "a society be established for the consideration and discussion of questions connected with literature and science". In another resolution religion and politics were forbidden to be discussed in the proposed Society.

The first President of the *Belhune Society* was Dr. Mouat and Pearychand Mitra was the first Secretary. It was a Society where people of different schools of thought met, as is indicated from the list of members which included Rev. Long, Dr. Sprenger, Major J. T. Marshall, Dr. Suryakumar Goodeve Chakravarty, Rev. K. M. Banerjee, Devendranath Tagore, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ramgopal Ghose. Raja Radhakanta Deb was at first not a member of the Society, but he later joined it. Maulavi Abdul Latif Khan became an active member—probably the first instance of a Moslem participation in a general cultural organization in the nineteenth century. The Society soon became popular and a branch was founded in Dacca. It had a long life and even in 1888-89 a meeting was held in which Bipin Chandra Pal read an article on *The Present Social Reactions* with H.J.S. Cotton in the chair. The years from 1851 to 1869 formed the most active period in the history of the Society. In the meetings of the Society eminent persons read articles and discussions were held on subjects such as Bengali, Sanskrit and English literature, Art and Architec-

ture, Sculpture, Physiology, Social customs, Astronomy, Indian and European History, China and the Chinese People, Travels, Women's Education, Civilization and innumerable other subjects. The Society was passing through a lean period in 1859 when Dr. Alexander Duff was persuaded to become its President, after the restrictions on political and religious discussions in the Society meetings had been removed. Dr. Duff succeeded in rejuvenating the Society. Its work was divided into six sections—Education, Philosophy and Literature, Arts and Science, Health and Medicine, Sociology and Upliftment of Women. Each section was placed under a special member and the sections worked on their respective spheres. On the achievements of the Society the Report of 1861 wrote that “it had succeeded in bringing together... for mutual intellectual culture and national recreation, the very elite of the educated native community and blending them in friendly union with leading members of the Civil, Military and Medical services of Government, of the Calcutta bar, of the Missionary body, and other non-official classes” The Society continued to flourish under the successive presidency of a number of distinguished men and succeeded in fulfilling its objective.

**SILPAVIDYOTSAHINI SABHA** :—The idea of an institution for the cultivation of science, industry and arts was first conceived by Col. E. Goodwin, a Government Engineer, in an article entitled *Union of Science, Industry and Arts* read in the *Bethune Society* on 2 March, 1854. Goodwin later prepared a detailed scheme for the proposed institution and among its objects he included organizing lectures and discussions, exhibitions, scholarships for meritorious students, publication of books on science, industry and arts etc. For the implementation of these objectives he suggested the opening of a library, a museum and a technical institution. The *Silpa-vidyotsahini Sabha* was established in March 1854, and Goodwin was elected its first President. A technical school was soon opened, where painting, carpentry, stone and metal engraving, pottery etc. were taught. An exhibition of painting, arts and crafts, sculpture etc. was organized in 1855 and it was a grand success. From 1856 annual exhibitions of the works of the students of the technical school were organized

and these created great interest in arts and crafts among the people. From 1864 the Government took over the school.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF INDIA :—**From about 1857 Photography was included as a subject of study in the technical school. Before that on 2 January, 1856, had been formed the *Photographic Society* with Dr. Mouat as President and Rajendralal Mitra as Secretary and Treasurer. The Society imported cameras, films and other equipment for the spread of scientific photography in India.

**SAMAJANNATI-BIDHYAINI-SUHRID SAMITI :—**On the initiative of Kisorichand Mitra this organization was founded on 15 December, 1854, with the object of working concertedly for social reforms and improvements. Devendranath Tagore was its first President and support for women's education, widow remarriage and the campaigns against polygamy, and child-marriage etc. were among its objectives. A girls' school was founded at Kisorichand's residence at Cossipore. The *Samiti* offered a prize of Rs. 500/- for the best essay on the condition of the *ryots* in Bengal. But no suitable essay was received. It was decided to spend the money for helping the publication of original and research works.

**VIDYOTSAHINI SABHA :—**Kaliprosanna Sinha, then a mere lad of 14, founded a literary association in 1853. This later developed into the *Vidyotsahini Sabha*. The main object of the *Sabha* was the cultivation of the Bengali language and the encouragement of writers. Almost all the Bengali members of the *Bethune Society* were members of this organization. The younger men were more at ease in the homely atmosphere of the *Sabha* than the serious and formal one of the *Bethune Society*. Literary discussions and debates were held and articles and poems were read in the meetings mostly in Bengali but at times in English as well. The *Sabha* also offered felicitations to renowned authors. On 12 February, 1861, the *Sabha* felicitated Michael Madhusudan Datta for his *Meghnadh-badh Kavya* and on 1 March, 1862, Rev. Long was honoured in recognition of his great service to and love for the Indians. It had an organ, the *Vidyotsahini Patrika*. A theatre named the *Vidyotsahini Rangamancha* was opened in 1857 for staging dramas, and its contribution in this field

was considerable. The *Sabha* supported the social reform movements and offered Rs. 1,000/- to each person who would marry a widow. As is evident, it was an organization of rich and influential men belonging to well-known families. Nevertheless, the welfare of the country was in their minds and their energy and resources were utilized for noble causes.

**FAMILY LITERARY CLUB<sup>1</sup> :—**This was also a literary club founded in 1857. Historical subjects, educational problems, social reforms, scientific inventions, and various other subjects were discussed in the meetings. Distinguished men like Rev. Long, Rev. K. S. McDonald, W. C. Bonnerjee, Rev. K. M. Banerjee, Dwijendranath Tagore, and Rev. Lalbihari Dey, were connected with the Club. The Club offered two prizes for the best essays on agriculture and ran an Anglo-Vernacular School.

**BAMABODHINI SABHA :—**In the second half of the nineteenth century the Brahmo Samaj under the leadership of Keshabchandra Sen was taking great interest in women's emancipation. In 1863 the *Antopur Strisiksha Sabha* for educating elderly family women had been formed. In the same year the *Bamabodhini Sabha* was established with the object of publishing books and magazines for the mental development of the women, holding essay competitions for women, educating elderly women in Bengali families, and the general welfare of the womenfolk. Among the founders were Umeshchandra Datta, Bijaykrishna Goswami and Basantakumar Ghose. The *Sabha* started a journal—the *Bamabodhini Patrika* with Umeshchandra Datta as its editor.

**MUHAMMADAN LITERARY SOCIETY :—**This was a cultural organization of the Moslems founded by Nawab Abdul Latif in 1863.

**HARE PRIZE-FUND COMMITTEE :—**In loving memory of David Hare, a Hare-Prize Fund was started on 23 June, 1844. Ramgopal Ghose, Harimohan Sen and Devendranath Tagore

<sup>1</sup> The name *Burrabazar Family Literary Club* is also found. While in one place Prasad Das Mallik is mentioned as its founder (*Banglar Nabya Sanskriti*—p. 69), in another place Rev. K. M. Banerjee is said to have taken the initiative. (*Visvabharati Patrika*, 12th year, No. 4, pp. 296-297).

were Trustees of the Fund. From the Fund an annual Prize was given for the best article in Bengali on any subject relating to public welfare. From 1864 it was decided to offer a prize to the author of the best Bengali book judged suitable for women. On the cover of the prize-winning books "Hare-Prize" was to be written. At least five books were published with the help of the Hare-Prize and besides that the Committee did much to promote women's education, particularly among elderly women.

**UTTARPARA HITAKARI SABHA** :—This organization for public welfare in Uttarpara, a few miles from Calcutta, owed its origin to the illustrious Mukherjee family of Uttarpara of whom Rajkrishna Mukherjee and Jaykrishna Mukherjee are well-known for their philanthropy and patronage of public causes. In the words of Mary Carpenter, who visited India in 1866, "The great objects of the Hitokorry Shova are to educate the poor, to help the needy, to clothe the naked, to give medicines to the indigent sick, to support poor widows and orphans, to promote the cause of temperance as a branch of the Bengal Temperance Society and to ameliorate the social, moral and intellectual condition of the members themselves and of their fellow inhabitants of Ooterperah and its vicinity". Though the organization had very wide objectives it mainly concentrated on the spread of women's education, and the Report on Public Instruction for 1876-77 stated that "The chief authority on the subject of female education in the Burdwan division is the Hitakari Sabha". Peary-mohan Banerjee of Uttarpara donated all his property to this organization.

**BANGIYA SAMAJVIJÑAN SABHA** (The Bengal Social Science Association) :—Social Science was a subject of study among the Bengali intellectuals from the middle of the nineteenth century. One of the main sections of the *Bethune Society* was devoted to Sociology. Rev. Long gave an inspiring and thought-provoking lecture on *Social-Science—its Utility for India* on 27 April, 1866 in the Family Literary Club. Miss Mary Carpenter, soon after her arrival in Calcutta in 1866, contacted leading men of Calcutta and discussed with them the scheme of setting up a place for the promotion of Social

Science. With this object in view, a meeting was held in the *Asiatic Society* on 17 December, 1866 which was attended by the Viceroy, other high Government officials, and eminent Indians and foreigners in Calcutta. In the meeting Miss Carpenter suggested the opening of a branch of the *National Association for the Cultivation of Social Science in Great Britain* in Bengal. A Committee was formed to examine the proposal and prepare a draft scheme for the proposed Society. The Committee suggested the setting up of an independent Society in Bengal and prepared a draft constitution for the same. This was considered in a general meeting held on 22 January, 1867, and after discussions the *Bengal Social Science Association* was formed. "The object of the Association", according to the Prospectus, was "to promote the development of social progress in the presidency of Bengal, by uniting Europeans and Natives of all classes in the collection, arrangement and classification of facts bearing on the social, intellectual and moral condition of the people". There were four sections of the Association—Law, Education, Health, Commerce and Economics. The sections conducted research on their respective branches and many distinguished men read articles in the Association on different aspects of sociology. Seven volumes of the Transactions of the Society were published in ten years. Men like Rev. K. M. Banerjee, Dr. Mouat, J. B. Fier, Robert Night, Kisorichand Mitra, Rev. Lalbihari Dey, Kailashchandra Bose, Maulavi Abdul Latif Khan, Chandranath Bose, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Keshabchandra Sen and Shyamacharan Sarkar read articles or spoke on various subjects like the social structure, social customs, methods of education, higher education, mass education, women's education, language and literature, folk-literature, crime and criminals, juvenile criminals, prison and prison laws, the condition of peasants and workers etc.

In 1870 Miss Mary Carpenter, Miss Florence Nightingale, and Justice J. B. Fier were elected Honorary Members of the Association. Miss Nightingale often encouraged the Association through correspondence and also sent donations. She sent an article *On Indian Sanitation* to the Association in 1870 and Miss Carpenter, during her visit in 1875, gave a talk on *Prison discipline and reformatory schools*. The



Association was unique of its kind in Bengal and by applying the scientific method of enquiry to different aspects of sociology it made great contribution to the growth of public interest in a subject of vital and absorbing interest.

**THE INDIAN REFORM ASSOCIATION :—**The *Indian Reform Association* was formed by Keshabchandra Sen on his return from England in 1870. Its object was “to promote the social and moral reformation of India”. Keshabchandra Sen himself became the President, while the Secretary was Gobindachandra Dhar. The Association had five sections, each under a sectional Secretary. These were :

- (1) Female improvement—Secretary : Umeshchandra Datta.
- (2) Education of the working classes and technical education—Secretary : Jayakrishna Sen.
- (3) Cheap literature—Secretary : Umanath Gupta.
- (4) Temperance—Secretary : Jadavchandra Roy.
- (6) Charity—Secretary : Kantichandra Mitra.

Besides these the Association also opened Homes for fallen women, campaigned against gambling and the selling of pornographic pictures etc.

**BAMAHITAISINI SABHA :—**This association for the welfare of women was established on 4 April, 1871 by the elderly students of the Women Teachers' Training School run by the Indian Reform Association. Its inspirer and President was Keshabchandra and its Secretary was Radharani Lahiri. The *Sabha* used to hold fortnightly meetings and discussed matters concerning the progress and upliftment of women. Mrs. Fier, Mrs. Monomohan Ghose, Mrs. W. C. Bonnerjea, and Mrs. Durgamohan Das were members of the organization. The *Bamahitaisini Sabha* was in existence upto 1879. But the schism in the Brahmo Samaj adversely affected it. In 1879 the followers of Keshabchandra Sen formed the *Arya Nari Samaj* while the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj took the initiative in opening the *Brahmo Mahila Samaj* a few months later. Both these two organizations served the cause of social reform for a long time.

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE CULTIVATION OF SCIENCE :—Facilities for conducting research and original investigations in scientific subjects by advanced Indian students were singularly lacking in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, an eminent homeopath and distinguished public man of Calcutta, conceived the idea of opening a research institution with libraries, laboratories and other equipment for Indian students wishing to carry on research in scientific subjects. His scheme was warmly welcomed and supported by all educationists and leading men of Calcutta. Necessary funds were raised by generous public donation and the *Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science* was founded in 1876. This was the first non-official scientific research institution in India and was a landmark in the history of the development of science in India under Indian initiative, and is still functioning on a much enlarged scale.

SOME BENGALI NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY.<sup>1</sup>

**DIGDARSHAN** :—The monthly *Digdarshan*, appearing in April 1818, was the first Bengali journal. It was published by the Serampore Baptist Mission and edited by J. C. Marshman. The School Book Society purchased many copies of the *Digdarshan* as they considered it suitable as a school text and requested the editor of the journal to publish its English translation. Consequently, besides the Bengali edition, English and English-Bengali editions of the *Digdarshan* were published.

**SAMACHAR DARPAN** :—This was the first Bengali weekly newspaper (23 May, 1818). The *Samachar Darpan* was published by the Serampore Mission and edited by J. C. Marshman with the assistance of Indian Pandits, among whom were Jaygopal Tarkalankar and Tarinicharan Siromoni. From 11 July, 1829, an English edition of the paper was started. For some time it became a bi-weekly paper. The last issue of the *Darpan* came out on 25 December, 1841, and it was then discontinued as Marshman became overburdened with two other journals.

In 1842, with Bhagabaticharan Chatterjee as the editor, the *Darpan* was revived by some Bengalis. However, it did not last long. The Serampore Mission again revived the paper in 1851 and it continued for a year and a half. The *Samachur Darpan* was one of the most important papers of the period. Its issues are one of the main source materials for the period.

**BENGAL GAZETTE** :—This was a weekly paper published by Gangakishore Bhattacharya, first appearing in June 1818. There is a controversy as to which of the two papers—*Samachar Darpan* and *Bengal Gazette*—was first published.

<sup>1</sup> Based on *Bangla Samayik Patra* by Brojendranath Pandopadhyay and *Bangla Samayik Sahitya* (1818—1867) and *Bangla Samayik Sahitya*, vol. II (1868—1900) by the same author.

Gangakishore Bhattacharya was the first Bengali to start a paper. It continued for about a year.

**GOSPEL MAGAZINE** :—This bilingual (English and Bengali) monthly journal was started in December 1819, by the Baptist Auxiliary Missionary Society with the object of propagating Christian theology.

**BRAHMUNICAL MAGAZINE : THE MISSIONARY AND THE BRAHMUN No. 1. (*Brahman Sebadhi O Missionary Sambad*)** : On 14 July, 1821, a letter was published in the *Samachar Darpan* attacking Hinduism. Rammohun sent a letter to the editor of the *Darpan* replying to the unjust attacks and vindicating Hinduism. The *Samachar Darpan* refused to publish Rammohun's reply as it was. Then Rammohun, in the name of Sibaprosad Sarma, started in September 1821, the journal *Brahmunical Magazine : The Missionary and the Brahmun No. 1. (Brahman Sebadhi O Missionary Sambad)*. In this journal one side of the page was in Bengali and the other side contained an English translation. Two more numbers of the *Brahmunical Magazine* were probably published. (Supra, p. 17)

**SAMBAD KAUMUDI** :—*Sambad Kaumudi* was originally started by Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay and Tarachand Datta on 4 December, 1821. The object of this weekly was public welfare and discussion of public grievances. This paper was the chief organ of Raja Rammohun. From 1830 it became a bi-weekly paper. (Supra pp. 22, 28). The *Sambad Kaumudi* continued to be published for some time after 1832.

**SAMACHAR CHANDRIKA** :—The *Samachar Chandrika* was the chief organ of the conservatives. This weekly first came out on 5 March, 1822 with Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay, who had left the company of Rammohun owing to ideological differences, as the editor. The *Samachar Chandrika* became very popular and was the great rival of *Sambad Kaumudi*. From April 1829, it became a bi-weekly paper. Bhabanicharan edited the paper till his death in 1848 when his son Rajkrishna Banerjee took over its publication. But he was soon in debt and Bhagabaticharan Chatterjee bought

the rights of paper ; but by that time it had lost its popularity and importance.

**SAMBAD TIMIRNASAK** :—This was a conservative weekly paper, first published in October 1823, by Krishnamohan Das. A few years later it became a bi-weekly paper. Its publication was discontinued before 1837.

**BANGADUT** :—The first number of this weekly, edited by Nilratna Halder, came out on 10 May, 1829. After him Bholanath Sen became the editor of the paper.

**SAMBAD PRABHAKAR** :—The *Sambad Prabhakar* of Iswar-chandra Gupta was one of the most popular papers of the age. It came out on 28 January, 1831 as a weekly. In starting the paper Iswar Gupta was financed by Jogendramohan Tagore of Pathuriaghata. As a weekly it continued upto May 1832, after which its publication was discontinued. It reappeared on 10 August, 1836 and this time it was published thrice weekly and from 14 June, 1839 it became a daily paper. A monthly edition of the *Sambad Prabhakar* began to be published from 1854 (*Baisakh*, 1260 B.S.) in which invaluable articles, particularly on the lives and works of Bengali poets of the past, were published. The *Sambad Prabhakar*, though essentially conservative in attitude, was a paper of high standard, and its contribution to Bengali literature was immense. (Supra, pp. 200-202)

**SAMBAD SUDHAKAR** :—This weekly paper was moderate in outlook. It was edited by Premchand Roy and the first issue was published on 23 February, 1831.

**SAMACHAR SABHARAJENDRA** :—This was a conservative weekly paper published by Sheikh Alimulla. The first number was published on 7 March, 1831. The paper was published in Bengali and Persian and was the first paper in Bengali to be edited by a Moslem.

**JNANANVESHAN** :—One of the well-known Derozian journals, the *Jnananveshan*, edited by Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, was first published on 18 June, 1831. From 1833 it became a bilingual weekly (English and Bengali) and the Bengali section was practically run by Gaurisankar Tarka-

vagish. The paper ceased to be published from November 1840, on which the *Calcutta Courier* commented on 26 November, 1840: "The *Gyannaneshun* Native Newspaper has, we regret to hear, been given up for want of public support. It existed about ten years and was for some time ably conducted by a number of College students. In its palmy days it was a legitimate organ of the educated Hindoos, but since the retirement of Baboo Russic Krishna Mullick, and Duckinanunden Mookerjee, who originally established the paper, merely with the view of keeping alive a spirit of liberal enquiry amongst the Hindoos and combating the prejudices of the orthodox party, it exhibited many symptoms of dotage and decay, till in the course of the present week it died a natural death".

**JNANODAYA** :—This monthly journal, intended for the children, was first published by Ramchandra Mitra and Krishnadhan Mitra in December 1831. It continued for little more than a year and a half.

**SAMBAD RATNAVALI** :—This was a weekly paper first published on 24 July, 1832. The editor was Maheshchandra Pal, but the paper was actually edited by Iswarchandra Gupta. The paper had a short life of one year and eight months, but it was revived in 1845 when Brojomohan Chakravarty edited the paper.

**VIJNANSARA-SANGRAHA** (The Hindoo Manual of Literature and Science) :—This fortnightly bilingual (English and Bengali) magazine was first published in September 1833. The journal was edited by M. Woleston, Gangacharan Sen Gupta and Nabakumar Chakravarty, teachers of the Sanskrit College. From 1834 it became a monthly magazine. The original object of the magazine was "to communicate to the Natives a knowledge of European Literature and Science", and in the monthly magazine it was advertised that "with a view to render the Series more acceptable to their European Subscribers, the Editors purpose to devote a portion of the work to original translations of interesting passages from Sanscrit and Bengallee authors".

**SAMBAD PURNACHANDRODAYA** :—On 10 June, 1835 the first

issue of the monthly *Sambad Purnachandrodaya* was published with Harachandra Banerjee as the editor. It became a weekly from April 1836, and from November 1844, it became a daily paper. The paper was very popular and had a long existence for 73 years.

**SAMBAD BHASKAR** :—Srinath Roy started the weekly *Sambad Bhaskar* in March 1839. The paper was actually run by Gaurisankar Tarkavagish. On the death of Srinath Roy in October 1840, the *Calcutta Courier*, while regretting his demise, pointed out that there was nothing to fear as to the fate of the *Sambad Bhaskar* as the paper really owed its success to the editor of the *Gyannaneshun* (i.e. Tarkavagish). Of the latter the *Calcutta Courier* wrote : "His writings, as far as we have been able to judge, are always characterized by good sense and a vigorous style. Being freed from the trammels of Hindu superstition, he gladly embraces every opportunity of exposing the folly of his bigoted countrymen, and shewing the great utility of cultivating European knowledge". From January 1848, it became a bi-weekly paper and the next year it began to be published thrice weekly. After the death of Gaurisankar in 1859, the paper was run by his adopted son Kshetramohan Bhattacharya. The *Sambad Bhaskar* was one of the popular papers of that age.

**SAMBAD RASARAJ** :—The weekly *Sambad Rusaraj*, first published on 29 November, 1839, was run by Gaurisankar Tarkavagish, though its nominal editor was Kalikanta Ganguly. The paper was very popular but earned a bad name for its obscenity for which Gaurisankar was convicted and sentenced more than once. The paper ceased to be published in 1857 but was revived in 1861. But still it did not eschew obscenity for which the editor Kshetramohan Bhattacharya was convicted. In 1863 the paper reappeared and this time it became a literary paper.

**MURSHIDABAD SAMBADPATRI** :—Gurudayal Chaudhury edited this weekly paper first published on 10 May, 1840 from Murshidabad. This was the first paper to be published from moffussil area.

**BENGAL SPECTATOR** :—This well-known monthly of the

Young Bengal first came out in April 1842. (Supra, p. 47-48). Later it became a fortnightly, then a weekly and finally a daily paper. It had a short but useful life as a progressive paper.

**TATTVABODHINI PATRIKA** :—The first number of this famous monthly came out on 16 August, 1843. (Supra, pp. 86-90).

**NITYADHARMANURANJIKA** :—This fortnightly journal edited by Nandakumar Kaviratna was first published on 11 January, 1846 and continued for ten years, after which it became a monthly. Orthodox in outlook, its object according to the *Bengal Harkara* (13 January, 1846) was, "to support the popular religion of the Hindoo, and oppose tooth and nail the spread of Vedantism or any creed other than the one it advocates".

**SAMACHAR JNANADARPAN** :—Umakanta Bhattacharya edited this weekly (17 October, 1846) published from the *Sambad Bhaskar* Press. On it the *Friend of India* commented : "It promises chiefly to discuss questions of morality and religion, leaving aside politics, we presume, to its able brother the *Bhaskar*. So we have now three journals of different characters issuing from the Press, the *Bhaskar*, the politician, *Rosoraj*, the satirist, and the *Gan Durpan* the moralist". The paper continued for three years.

**SAMBAD SADHURANJAN** :—Iswardhendra Gupta first published this weekly in August 1847. Later Nabakrishna Roy became the editor of the paper and it continued to be published till 1859.

**SAMBAD MUKTAVALI** :—The weekly *Sambad Muktavali* was published from Sibpore, Howrah by Kalikanta Bhattacharya under the patronage of Raja Rajnarayan of Andul. Starting in 1848 it continued for one year.

**SAMBAD RASASAGAR** :—Kshetramohan Banerjee edited this weekly paper, which was first published in March 1849. From November 1849, it was published thrice weekly. After the death of Kshetramohan, the paper was edited by Rangalal Banerjee and from April 1852, it was renamed *Sambad Sagar*.



**SATYARNAB** :—In July 1850, with Rev. Long as editor, the *Satyarnab* was started. This monthly magazine contained various literary, cultural and educational subjects but the emphasis was on religion. The journal continued for five years.

**SARVASUBHAKARI PATRIKA** :—This *Patrika* was the monthly organ of the *Sarvasubhakari Sabha* and made its first appearance in August 1850.

**BIBIDHARTHA SANGRAHA** :—The *Bibidhartha Sangraha* was published under the auspices of the Vernacular Literature Society in October 1851. Its editor was Rajendralal Mitra. It was a monthly magazine of high standard. In 1861 Kaliprosanna Sinha became the editor of the magazine. (Supra. p. 213, 222).

**DHARMARAJ** :—This monthly journal, edited by Taraknath Datta, was first published in February 1853, with the object of vindicating the Hindu religion and oppose the proselytizing Christian missionaries.

**SAMACHAR SUDHABARSAN** :—This was a bilingual (Bengali and Hindi) daily, first published in June 1854, with Shyamsundar Sen as the editor. (Supra, p. 164).

**MASIK PATRIKA** :—Pearychand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar jointly edited the *Masik Patrika* which was intended mainly for women. It continued for about three years, beginning on 16 August, 1854.

**VIDYOTSAHINI PATRIKA** :—The *Patrika* was the organ of the *Vidyotsahini Sabha* and was edited by Kaliprosanna Sinha. Its first number was published on 20 April, 1855.

**BANGA VIDYA PRAKASIK** :—First published as a monthly in September 1855, with Nabinchandra Adhya as the editor, the paper became a fortnightly and ultimately a daily paper.

**EDUCATION GAZETTE O SAPTAHIK BARTABAHA** :—The *Education Gazette* first came out on 4 July, 1856. Of the *Gazette* the Director of Public Instruction wrote in the Report (1856-57) : "About the beginning of the year under report, a Newspaper in Bengali, called the *Educational*

*Gazette*, was established, under the Editorial charge of the Reverend O'Brien Smith, under the auspices and patronage of this Department, assisted by a Government Grant of Rupees 200 a month. The object is to supply the people in the interior of the country with a Newspaper cheap in price and healthy in tone". Rangalal Banerjee was connected with the paper for some time. In 1866 Pearycharan Sarkar became the editor of the *Gazette*. In May 1868, Pearycharan published a report of a railway accident in the *Gazette* which displeased the Government and the former was censured. Pearycharan gave a spirited reply and said that the report was based on accounts given in other leading papers and personal enquiries made by him from reliable sources. He further stated, "On reference to the conditions on which the Education Gazette is supported by Government, I find nothing, I beg to submit, which to my understanding, prevents me from giving expression to my impressions and convictions on passing events." Pearycharan resigned from the editorship of the *Gazette* and Bhudeb Mukherjee was appointed in his place. The Government gave him all rights of the *Gazette* and he ran that paper with great success.

ARUNODAYA :—Rev. Lalbihari Dey edited the fortnightly paper *Arunodaya*, first published in August 1856. It set a high standard of journalism and continued till 1862.

HINDU RATNAKAMALAKAR :—First published on 24 February, 1857 this weekly was another paper that was edited by Gaurisankar Tarkavagish. It was intended to be used as a weapon in defence of Hinduism.

SUBODHINI :—*Subodhini* was a fortnightly literary magazine of high quality published from Chinsurah, edited by Ramchandra Dichhit. The first issue was dated 13 January, 1858.

SOMPROKASH :—The *Somprokash* was one of the most important papers in the second half of the nineteenth century. First published on 15 November, 1858 this fortnightly paper under the editorship of Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan came to occupy an important place in the history of Indian journalism. The scheme of the paper was that of Vidyasagar.

and he gave Dwarakanath Vidyabhusan all help in running the paper. On the temporary retirement of the latter in 1865 the *Hindu Patriot* wrote : "In fact the retiring editor of the *Shome Prokash* taught his native brethren of the journalism craft a new style of journalism. His loss to the cause of Indian advocacy will be severely felt". Sibnath Sastri edited the paper for some time in 1874. Political matters and social reform activities were reported and discussed in the *Somprokash* which stood far above petty quarrels and conflicts. Literary reviews were a special feature of the paper.

**VIJNAN KAUMUDI** :—Edited by Jagmohan Tarkalankar, this magazine, intended for discussion of science and spread of scientific knowledge, first came out in September 1860.

**DACCA PROKASH** :—The first weekly to be published from Dacca, the *Dacca Prokash* was published on 7 March, 1861. Krishnachandra Mazumdar edited the paper.

**BHARATVARSHA SAMBAD PATRA** :—This bi-monthly paper, mainly containing political news and discussions, was edited by Tarakchandra Churamoni. The first number was published in May 1861. The paper was distributed free of cost and was financed by Pratapchandra Sinha, Iswarchandra Sinha, Kalikrishna Deb, Kamalkrishna Deb, Kaliprosanna Sinha and others.

**PARIDARSHAK** :—This was a short lived daily paper first started by Jagmohan Tarkalankar and Madanmohan Tarkalankar in July 1861. Later it was edited by Kaliprosanna Sinha.

**SUBHAKARI PATRIKA** :—This was the monthly organ of the *Subhakari Sabha* and was edited by Ramsaday Bhattacharya. It was originally intended to deal with certain subjects such as history, literature and science excluding ordinary news. But news items were later included in the journal. It existed from 1862 to 1865.

**AMRITAPRAHAJINI** :—This fortnightly paper was published from Jessore by Basantakumar Ghose, elder brother of Sisirkumar Ghose. The first issue came out in December 1862,

and the paper was intended to include subjects like science, literature, industry, agriculture etc. With the illness of Basantakumar, a few years later, the paper was discontinued.

**AYURVEDA PATRIKA** :—This was a medical journal published with the help of Dr. Robert Bird, the Civil Surgeon of Howrah and edited by Dwarakanath Das. This weekly first appeared in January 1863.

**RAHASYA SANDARBHA** :—The *Rahasya Sandarbha* (February, 1863) was a monthly magazine published under the auspices of the Calcutta School Book Society and the Vernacular Literature Society. Its first editor was Rajendralal Mitra. It was a literary magazine of high standard. After Rajendralal Mitra, Pranatanath Datta edited the magazine.

**GRAMABARTA PROKASIKA** :—In May 1863, Harinath Mazumdar (Kangal Harinath) of Kumarkhali started this monthly. In the first number of the journal he wrote that the Bengali newspapers and journals were full of foreign news of the big towns and cities. The rural news and affairs concerning the interest and welfare of the villagers had hitherto been neglected and the *Gramabarta Prokasika* was to meet this long standing need and devote itself to village news, affairs and problems. It later became a bi-monthly and ultimately a weekly paper. The paper continued for a long time and served a very useful purpose in bringing to light rural affairs and grievances.

**ABODHBANDHU** :—This monthly magazine was first published in April 1863, with Jogendranath Ghose as the editor, but disappeared after a few numbers. It was revived in February 1867. Biharilal Chakravarty and Krishnakamal Bhattacharya were closely connected with the magazine where many of their works were published. The *Abodhbandhu* made a significant contribution and Rabindranath referred to it as the 'morning star' of modern Bengali literature.

**BAMABODHINI PATRIKA** :—The monthly *Bamabodhini Patrika*, edited by Umeshchandra Datta of Majilpore, first appeared in August 1863. It was the organ of the *Bamabodhini Sabha* and during its long existence did much for women's emancipation.

**SIKSHA DARPAN O SAMBADSAR** :—This monthly educational journal was edited by Bhudeb Mukherjee. It started from April 1864. Three years later it was renamed *Siksha Darpan O Masik Patrika* (consequent of an amalgamation with the *Bardhaman Masik Patrika*). It was discontinued after 1868 when Bhudeb Mukherjee took charge of the *Education Gazette*.

**DHARMATATVA** :—The monthly *Dharmatattva*, an organ of the Brahmos, was first published in October 1864. It was a bilingual (English and Bengali) magazine containing articles and discussions on religious and social subjects. It later became a bi-monthly magazine.

**VIJNAPANI** :—First published in March 1865, from Dacca by Girishchandra Raichoudhury, it was a weekly journal of repute edited by Krishnachandra Mazumdar. From 1866 it was published from Mymansingh and continued to be published till the end of 1868.

**HINDU HITAISINI** :—With the object of defending Hindu religion and ceremonies the weekly *Hindu Hitaishini* was started in March 1865, with Harishchandra Mitra as the editor. The paper, as the organ of the *Dacca Hindu Dharma Rakshini Sabha*, campaigned against the Brahmos for a long time.

**CHIKITSAK** :—The *Chikitsak* was a monthly medical journal started by the students of the Calcutta Medical College in January 1866.

**HINDU RANJIKI** :—The *Hindu Ranjika* published from Boalia (Rajshahi District) was a monthly magazine edited by Srinath Sinha Roy. Its first number was published in March 1866, with the avowed object of opposing the Brahmo movement and propagate Hindu religion and customs. From April 1868, it became a weekly and continued to be published for sixty-five years, which in itself was a great achievement.

**PALLI VIJNAN** :—This was a monthly journal published from Dacca in January 1867, by Rajmohan Chatterjee. In the first issue of the journal he emphasized the need of the spread of culture and education in village and with that objective the journal was started. It lasted only two years.

**HITASADHAK** :—In February 1868, Pearycharan Sarkar started the monthly *Hitasadhak* intended for the general readers and it included articles on various subjects of interest. It continued for only one year.

**AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA** :—Sisirkumar Ghose started the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on 20 February, 1868. At that time it was a weekly paper and was published from Jessore. The main objects of the paper were to publish political news and information about the general affairs in the country, to criticise the Government policy and activities and above all to infuse patriotism among the people. From 1869 it practically became a bilingual paper (Bengali and English). In 1871 the paper began to be published from Calcutta. On 14 March, 1878 the Vernacular Press Act was passed and from 21 March, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* became an English weekly in order to be free from the gagging Press Act. On 19 February, 1891, it became an English daily. The *Patrika's* contribution to the cause of Indian nationalism and the struggle for independence is immense. To-day it is one of the most popular and influential English dailies in India.

**ABALA BANDHAB** :—Dwarakanath Ganguly started the fortnightly *Abala Bandhab* in 1869 for the welfare of women. It originally started in Dacca, but with the coming of Dwarakanath to Calcutta it began to be published from Calcutta. Later it became a monthly and shortly afterwards ceased to be continued.

**BANGA-MAHILA** :—This fortnightly, started in 1860, continued for only one year. It was the first journal to be edited by a woman.

**BANGABANDHU** :—Started in 1870 from Dacca, this fortnightly edited by Bangachandra Roy was an organ of the Brahmos. It contained articles on political, social and religious subjects and continued upon 1907.

**SULABH SAMACHAR** :—This weekly pice paper was started in 1870 by the Indian Reform Association. In 1886 (27 August) it merged with the paper *Kusodaha and Bheri* and was renamed *Sulabh Samachar O Kusadaha*. In 1318 B.S. the

*Sulabh Samachar* became a daily but had a short life of only one year.

**MOD NA GARAL ?**—This monthly, literally meaning ‘Wine or Poison ?’, was the organ of the Temperance Section of the Indian Reform Association. It first appeared in 1871 and for sometime was edited by Sibnath Sastri. Thousand copies of each issue were printed and distributed.

**BANGADARSHAN** :—Edited by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, the monthly *Bangadarshan* first appeared in 1872. It occupies a unique position in the history of nineteenth century-Bengal. (Supra, p. 110).

**JNANANKUR** :—Edited by Srikrishna Das, this literary monthly first appeared in 1872. Some of the early writings of Rabindranath were published in this magazine. In 1875 it merged with the monthly *Pratibimba* and was named *Jnanankur-Pratibimba*.

**SADHARANI** :—This was a weekly started in 1873 by Akshoychandra Sarkar from Chinsurah. Bankimchandra, Indranath, Jogendrachandra Bose contributed to this weekly. After a few years the *Nababibhakar* merged with the *Sadharani* and the paper was renamed *Nababibhakar-Sadharani*.

**BANDHAB** :—The monthly *Bandhab*, edited by Kaliprosanna Ghose, was first published from Dacca in 1874. It was run on the model of the *Bangadarshan* and had a long life in course of which it maintained a high literary standard.

**SAMADARSHI OR THE LIBERAL** :—The monthly *Samadarshi* was a bilingual monthly organ of the Young Brahmos. It was started in 1874 and was edited by Sibnath Sastri.

**BHARATI** :—The monthly *Bharati*, started in 1877, was a literary magazine of high standard. For the first seven years it was edited by Dwijendranath Tagore. Among the later editors were Swarnakumari Devi, Sarala Devi, Rabindranath Tagore, Manilal Ganguly and Saurendranath Mukherjee. For about half a century the *Bharati* made great contribution to Bengali literature.

**DHARMA PRACHARAK** :—The *Dharma Pracharak* was a monthly organ of the orthodox Hindu revivalists. It was first published from Monghyr in 1877 and was edited by Krishnaprosanna Sen. Later it was published from Benaras and continued for about twentyfive years.

**ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA** :—A weekly paper—*Ananda Bazar Patrika* was started in 1878 in place of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which had become an English paper to evade the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. The present well-known Bengali daily of the same name was started in 1922 under the editorship and proprietorship of Sureshchandra Majumdar.

**PARICHARIKA** :—A women's monthly, the *Paricharika* was published under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj of India and its first editor (1878) was Pratapchandra Mazumdar. The monthly had a long life of twentyeight years.

**TATTVA-KAUMUDI** :—This was a fortnightly organ of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (1878) and its first editor was Sibnath Sastri.

**NALINI** :—Started in 1880, the monthly *Nalini* was a well known magazine. It was edited by Narendranath Bose.

**KALPANA** :—*Kalpana* was a reputed magazine edited by Haridas Banerjee. It was first published in 1880 and many distinguished writers regularly contributed to the magazine.

**PARIDARSHAK** :—Bipin Chandra Pal edited this weekly paper, first published from Sylhet in 1880.

**SANJIBANI** :—The weekly *Sanjibani* was started in 1883 with Dwarakanath Ganguly as its editor. Gaganchandra Home, Herambachandra Maitra, Krishnakumar Mitra, Kalisankar Sukul, Pareshnath Sen and others were connected with the foundation of the paper. Gaganchandra Home published a weekly of the same name in 1876 from Mymansingh, which may be regarded as the fore-runner of the *Sanjibani* of Calcutta.

**NABYABHARAT** :—Edited by Debiprosanna Raichaudhury, the *Nabyabharat* was started in 1883. It was a literary monthly of repute and continued for more than forty years.



**NABAJIBAN** :—In 1884 the monthly *Nabajiban* was started. It was edited by Akshoychandra Sarkar. Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, Hemchandra, Nabinchandra, Chandranath Bose, Indranath Bandopadhyay and other writers contributed to this journal.

**PRACHAR** :—The monthly *Prachar*, started in 1884, was run by Bankimchandra Chatterjee and it continued for four years.

**DAINIK** :—This daily was started in 1885. Its first editor was Krishnachandra Banerjee who was later succeeded by Kshetramohan Sengupta Vidyaratna. It existed for fourteen years.

**BIBHA** :—In 1887 Charuchandra Ghose started the monthly *Bibha*. Poet Gobindachandra Das of Bhawal was associated with this magazine.

**SIKSHA-PARICHAR** :—This monthly, edited by Saratchandra Chaudhury of Putia (Rajshahi District), was started in 1889. Akshoykumar Maitra was connected with this monthly which sought to cultivate learning and literature.

**SAHITYA** :—First published in 1890, the *Sahitya* was a well-known monthly journal edited by Sureshchandra Samajpati.

**JANMABHUMI** :—Edited by Pandit Panchanan Tarkaratna, the illustrated monthly *Janmabhumi* was started in 1890.

**BANGANIBASI** :—The *Banganibasi* was a well-known weekly. It was founded in 1890 by Bamdeb Datta. Among its later editors were Dwarakanath Ganguly and Byomkesh Mustafi.

**HITABADI** :—This weekly was started on 30 May, 1891. Its chief editor was Krishnakamal Bhattacharya and the editor of the literary section was Rabindranath Tagore. Shortly afterwards Kaliprosanna Kavyavisharad took charge of the weekly and succeeded in making it a leading paper of the time. After his death in 1907, the *Hitabadi* was run by noted writers such as Sakhambari Ganesh Dewskar, Jaladhar Sen and others.

**SADHANA** :—The monthly magazine *Sadhana* was started in 1891. Its founder-editor was Sudhindranath Tagore. From the fourth year it was edited by Rabindranath Tagore and *Sadhana* became one of the foremost literary magazines.

**BANKURA DARPAN** :—This fortnightly journal was first published from Bankura in 1892. From 1894 it became a weekly and continued to be published as one of the leading mofussil papers. Dr. Ramnath Mukherjee edited the paper from 1892 to 1937.

**MURSHIDABAD HITAISHI** :—Started in 1893, this weekly is still published from Murshidabad. Baikunthanath Sen was its first editor.

**BENGAL ACADEMY OF LITERATURE** (*Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*) :—The Bengal Academy of Literature was founded on 23 July, 1893, to cultivate and diffuse Bengali learning and literature. From August 1893, the proceedings of its weekly meetings were published, mostly in English, in its monthly magazine *The Bengal Academy of Literature*. In 1894 the association was renamed *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad* and the magazine was renamed *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad : The Bengal Academy of Literature*. From this year the quarterly organ of the institution *Sahitya-Parishad-Patrika* was started which still remains one of the foremost Bengali periodicals. The *Parishad* has made an immense contribution to Bengali learning and literature.

**SUHRID** :—The monthly *Suhrid* was started by the resident-students of Eden Hindu Hostel in 1894. Some budding men of letters such as Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Dinendrakumar Roy, Rajanikanta Sen, Hemendraprosad Ghose, Bijoychandra Mazumdar contributed to this magazine.

**MUKUL** :—In 1895 the *Mukul*, a monthly magazine for children edited by Sibnath Sastri, was started.

**BASUMATI** :—On 25 August, 1896 a weekly paper named *Basumati* was started. Its first editor was Byomkesh Mustafi and within a short time it became one of the popular Bengali papers. *Basumati* became a daily paper from 6 August, 1914 with Sasibhusan Mukherjee as the editor. The *Masik Basu-*

*mati*, a monthly literary magazine, first came out in 1922 (1329 B.S.) with Sri Hemendraprosad Ghose as the editor. The daily *Basumati* and the *Masik Basumati* have a large number of readers and enjoy great popularity even to-day.

**UTSAHA** :—In 1897 the monthly *Utsaha*, edited by Suresh-chandra Saha, was published from Boalia (Rajsahi District). Many notable authors including Rabindranath, Akshoykumar Maitra, Jaladhar Sen contributed to this magazine.

**PRADIP** :—With Ramananda Chatterjee as editor, the monthly *Pradip* was started in 1897. It was one of the leading magazines of the time.

**AITIHASIK CHITRA** :—On the suggestion of Rabindranath Tagore, Akshoykumar Maitra started this quarterly magazine from Rajsahi in 1899. The magazine, however, had a short existence of one year only.

**UDBODHAN** :—The fortnightly magazine *Udbodhan* was started in 1899 under the auspices of the Ramkrishna Mission. It contained articles on various subjects such as religion, philosophy, politics, literature, history etc. and was edited by Swami Trigunatita. Among those who wrote in the *Udbodhan* were Swami Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Saradananda, Girishchandra Ghose. From the tenth year it became a monthly and even to-day it is one of the notable Bengali magazines.

**SAHITYA-SAMHITA** :—Edited by Nrisinhachandra Mukherjee, this monthly magazine was started in 1900. Among the later editors was Kaliprosanna Kavyavisharad. Many reputed writers regularly contributed to this magazine.

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